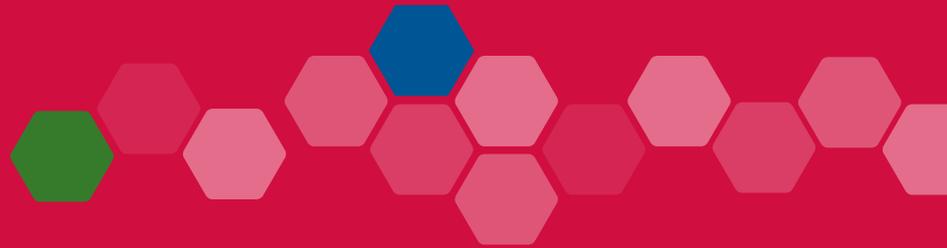




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Evaluation of Connecting Scotland Phase 3: Digital Support for Employability



EQUALITY AND WELFARE





Evaluation of Connecting Scotland Phase 3: Digital Support for Employability

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Digital Directorate Research

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Executive Summary

Connecting Scotland is a digital inclusion programme which was launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Periods of national lockdown meant that physical contact and access to services were limited; people without adequate digital connectivity were particularly at risk of isolation as they lacked alternative forms of interaction.

Connecting Scotland provided digital devices and internet connectivity, along with access to digital skills support, to people who were digitally excluded and on low incomes. This service was rolled out in three distinct phases. Phase 1 focused on those most vulnerable to the effects of lockdown; mainly older people, disabled people and those advised to shield during the pandemic. Phase 2 extended the offer of connectivity to families with dependent children, along with additional provision for young care leavers.

This evaluation report focuses on the third phase of the programme which had a specific focus on employability and aimed to help people secure work, or access activities that would improve their employment prospects, such as working towards a qualification.

Evaluation aims

Through research with people receiving support in phase 3 of the programme, we sought to understand the impact that access to digital support had on people's employment prospects. The research aimed to find out about people's experience of using the technology provided by Connecting Scotland and the types of activities being undertaken in support of employment goals.

The evaluation also sought to better understand the barriers that people faced, both to employment and to digital access, and the extent to which participation in the programme helped in reducing these barriers.

The research aimed to capture people's experiences over time by surveying users shortly after their initial engagement with the programme (the 'welcome survey'), and again after nine to twelve months of participation (the 'experience and impact survey'). Alongside surveys, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sub-sample of users to gain additional insight into people's experiences, thoughts and opinions.

Findings

Barriers to digital access

Most phase 3 users had some experience of going online and using digital technology and many described themselves as confident in their overall digital abilities. The chief barrier to full digital participation experienced by users in this cohort was lacking access to appropriate and functional devices and/or not having consistent internet connectivity. This was mainly owing to issues of affordability,

with 57% of survey respondents saying that the cost of devices prevented or limited their use of the internet, and 42% reporting that paying for data was too expensive.

Many people taking part in the research reported using old, outdated equipment that was slow or faulty and more than half had been using smartphones to undertake online activities, with no alternative device.

Other barriers to online use included having to travel to a public building (i.e. a library), having to use the internet in someone else's home, or only having access to one device which was shared between multiple household members.

A range of evidence gathered through the research illustrates how limitations on digital use affect people's ability to progress in employment. For example, using only a smartphone for online access makes it difficult to undertake some employment related activities, such as editing and saving a CV, completing online applications, or attending an online interview. People who had been using library computers explained how job searching was hampered by having only an allotted time-slot in which to work. Other people who weren't directly seeking work but were working towards qualifications reported the difficulties of having to rely on outdated devices when trying to complete assignments.

Impact on Employability

The evidence indicates that participation in Connecting Scotland has had a positive effect on people's employment prospects. More users responding to the final (impact) survey reported being in work and fewer people said they were still looking for work, when compared to the initial (welcome) survey. Of those who had found employment – the majority (94%) said that having a device from Connecting Scotland had been either essential, or helpful in attaining a job. Furthermore, 72% of respondents still looking for work reported that their chances of getting a job were a little, or a lot, better since participation in the programme.

The greatest impact of the programme appears to have been for those people who felt ready for work but needed support finding opportunities and making applications. Several people highlighted how their Connecting Scotland device had enabled them to edit and upload CVs and make online applications and there was a decrease in the proportion of people reporting that they were ready for a job but needed to find opportunities and work on applications.

However, for some people, barriers to employment seem to be entrenched. A number of people reported that their personal circumstances made it difficult for them to find suitable work, with mental health issues being particularly prominent. For these participants, it appears that digital support, alone, is not sufficient to secure employment, but should be offered as part of a more holistic, person centred approach to support.

Issues with childcare and transport were also identified as more intractable barriers to employment, suggesting that more systemic changes to services would be beneficial to helping people find work that is accessible and fits around other commitments.

Background to Connecting Scotland

Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government programme, delivered in partnership with the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO). It provides digital devices, connectivity and digital skills support to people on low incomes who are digitally excluded. Over three distinct phases, Connecting Scotland has, so far, helped more than 60,000 households to increase their digital engagement and harness the advantages of being online.

The first phase of the programme was launched in 2020, as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Periods of national lockdown meant that vulnerable people who were digitally excluded were at risk of severe isolation; with access to an internet-connected device, people were able to keep in touch with family, friends and services, and find ways to stay occupied. An [Evaluation of phase 1](#) was published in May 2022.

A second phase was launched in autumn 2020, targeted primarily at low income families with children. People in this phase used devices for a variety of activities, including, prominently, helping children to participate in schoolwork online. An [Evaluation of phase 2](#) was published in November 2022.

Phase 3 of Connecting Scotland was launched in Summer 2021. Over 20,000 devices were distributed in this phase, alongside the offer of digital skills support. The largest single cohort of users was people who were digitally excluded and seeking employment. This group of users is the focus of this report which looks at their experiences of being involved in the programme and the impacts that this has had for them.

Connecting Scotland programme delivery is currently paused as the service undergoes a full redesign. A new Connecting Scotland service will be relaunched this year with a changed delivery model, focused primarily on fostering sustainable, systemic approaches to tackling digital exclusion. Details of the renewed service will be set out in the Business Case (publication forthcoming).

An overview of the first three phases of Connecting Scotland is included at annex A

Delivery of Support

The delivery model for devices and digital skills support remained the same throughout the first 3 phases of Connecting Scotland. A detailed account of support delivery is provided at annex B but will be briefly summarised here.

Applications for equipment were made by support organisations (chiefly 3rd sector), across Scotland, on behalf of their clients who were digitally excluded. People supported through the programme could receive either an 'Apple iPad', or a 'Google Chromebook' plus a MiFi device (portable personal wireless internet) where needed. SCVO administered the application process and awarded the devices to successful applicant organisations to distribute to their users.

Digital skills support was provided by 'digital champions'; staff members working for organisations who applied to the programme. The role of digital champions is to help users with fundamental and/or essential digital skills so that they can operate their devices and utilise the internet productively. Because they are drawn from organisations that are already working with users, the role of digital champions may include other, non-digital, elements of support provision.

People receiving devices own those devices and can keep and use them for as long as they wish, however, MiFi connections for phase 3 users only remain active for 2 years. Connecting Scotland is currently exploring short-term extensions to connectivity in cases of extreme hardship for people whose MiFi connection is expiring.

What is Digital Exclusion?

In the UK, people's use of the internet and digital technology has rapidly increased in recent years. Lloyds bank's 'Consumer Digital Index' (2022)¹ shows that 99% of people had used the internet in the previous 3 months; an increase of 10% since 2016. In Scotland, the 2021 Scottish Household Survey (SHS)² estimates that 96% of households had home internet access. In short, having *no* access to the internet is now rare. This does not, however, indicate that digital exclusion is a marginal issue.

The Lloyds report uses the ONS (Office for National Statistics) definition of being online, which is having engaged with the internet in the last 3 months, but, as the report acknowledges, this is not a suitable proxy for measuring digital exclusion¹. Digital exclusion is not simply the inability to get online. It refers to the range of barriers that people face in being able to fully harness the benefits and opportunities afforded by digital access. Being digitally excluded could result from not being able to afford a consistent and reliable means of online access, not having suitable equipment, encountering inaccessible online content, or from a lack of adequate digital skills. Indeed, the Consumer Digital Index estimates that one fifth of UK adults lacks basic digital skills. In addition, perception and understanding of the internet itself can also be a cause of digital exclusion, with people not perceiving the benefits of engagement, though this is a more significant factor in older age groups³.

The definition of digital exclusion is evolving from a binary user/non-user understanding to one in which differential levels of access and use are foregrounded. In the research for Connecting Scotland, we have frequently found that people have some experience of going online and using digital devices, but that their full digital inclusion is constrained by, in most cases, not being able to afford adequate equipment or sufficient data. 'Digital inequality' is perhaps a more useful term by which to refer to these experiences.

¹ [UK Consumer Digital Index 2022 | Lloyds Bank](#)

² [Scottish Household Survey 2021](#)

³ [Digital motivations report - goodthingsfoundation](#)

Phase 3

People Supported in Phase 3: Focus on Employability

A specific target group in phase 3 was people seeking to progress towards employment. Applications were invited from organisations supporting individuals aged 16 and over, who were digitally excluded, from a low income household, and who were unemployed or wanted to improve their employment situation. Awarding devices via organisations was an expedient way to identify potential beneficiaries and to distribute devices. Organisations were entrusted to identify individuals who would most benefit from the programme and were expected to have sufficient capacity to provide digital champion support.

From research with people supported in phase 2, we know that access to a digitally connected device can positively impact on people's job seeking experience, though this was not an explicit aim of that phase. The present report provides an opportunity to further explore the relationship between digital inclusion and employability.

The employability phase of Connecting Scotland received 732 applications, of which 525 were successful. 8,656 digitally enabled devices (Chromebooks or iPads) were awarded along with 6,098 MiFi connections. A detailed description of the application process is provided at annex C.

Analysis of the applications indicates some of the groups of people supported in this phase. These included young people, people from a minority ethnic background, disabled people, women, and lone parents, although, of course, characteristics of users will overlap. All of these characteristics are associated with lower rates of employment⁴, although it should be borne in mind that a high proportion of 16-24 year-olds are in full time education. Nevertheless, young people in education may be considered as actively preparing for work and stand to benefit from both careers support and digital support to facilitate studies.

Employability and Connectivity

The relationship between digital inclusion and employability is complex. Lack of digital access is a barrier to gaining employment, but unemployment is also a barrier to being digitally included. People without income from work are less able to afford devices and connectivity or to have opportunities, through work, to use digital technology. Research by Ofcom shows that 13% of people who are not working do not have home internet access, compared to just 2% of those in work⁵.

Some of the underlying barriers to employability and digital inclusion are similar. People who are disabled, for instance, can find it harder to use digital technology

⁴ [Overview - Scotland's Labour Market: People, Places and Regions – Protected Characteristics. Statistics from the Annual Population Survey 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁵ [Digital exclusion: a review of Ofcom's research on digital exclusion among adults in the UK](#)

and/or find the cost of accessibility aides prohibitive. Disability can also limit the type, and amount, of work that people are able to do and travelling for work can present additional difficulties⁶. Of course, in some cases, a disability affecting the type of work people can do has little or no impact on people's ability to use digital technology, and vice-versa.

There is potential for the use of digital technology to help to remove the barriers to entering work that some disabled people encounter (for example; being able to work from home), although this is mediated by wider employment processes – such as the flexibility offered by employers⁷.

Lack of digital skills and confidence can restrict access to some forms of employment and can also be a barrier to developing digital skills in the first place. Somewhat counterintuitively, feelings of embarrassment over a lack of digital ability, as well as fear of getting things wrong, can demotivate people to engage with digital technology, and people remain excluded.⁸

Fostering digital inclusion is a crucial element in helping people to find suitable work, however, the impact of online access on employability can take different forms depending upon people's personal circumstances and proximity to the job market. For some, the ability to search and apply for jobs online may be the most significant factor in securing work, while for others digital connectivity can provide a way of accessing other services or information to help with wider issues that may stand in the way of seeking employment.

Digital technology has become central to both finding work and fulfilling occupational roles and people who are digitally excluded are distinctly disadvantaged in their ability to progress in employment. Thousands of jobs are advertised online and most job applications are now completed via online forms, or by emailing a CV and cover letter. Furthermore, access to the internet provides the opportunity to research roles and organisations which can strengthen applications and performance at interviews.

Employers are also increasingly looking for candidates with, at least, a basic level of digital skills. Roles that require digital skills are significantly better remunerated than those that don't and developing more specific digital skills can support career progression⁹.

As well as the direct enhancement of people's digital skills and capabilities, there are a number of ways in which online access can help people address wider barriers to employability. For example, the internet provides opportunities for people

⁶ [research-report-88-barriers-to-employment-and-unfair-treatment-at-work-disabled-peoples-experiences.pdf \(equalityhumanrights.com\)](#)

⁷ [The disability employment gap - what's digital got to do with it? | BCS](#)

⁸ [Digital Inclusion in Housing Event Summary-DRAFT.pdf \(tec.scot\)](#)

⁹ [Improving digital skills for employability - Good Things Foundation](#)

to engage in education online; remotely accessing materials and courses that can provide workplace-specific learning or qualifications.

Many people can find it difficult to find suitable work due to personal circumstances, such as caring commitments or health issues¹⁰. While online access may not be able to remove these barriers entirely, people can enjoy wider, and easier, access to advice and support that might help people to find solutions. Where working is not realistic, people can use the internet to find out about other support they might be eligible for.

Furthermore, internet connected devices can facilitate more flexible and efficient ways of working. For example, people can more easily search and apply for part-time, or free-lance, job opportunities; reliable connectivity means people can work remotely (where feasible); people can use online applications to plan, and book, travel to find efficient and cost-effective ways of getting to work.

For some people, barriers to employment can be more fundamental, and gaining employment might not be an *immediate* concern, but a longer term aim. To illustrate, in the phase 3 'welcome' survey, 27% of people said that they felt they needed to deal with a personal problem before being able to concentrate on finding work, and 42% of respondents identified mental health difficulties as a barrier to working. In these cases, devices and connection can, in the first instance, help people access information, advice and services that might help them to address some of the more deep-seated issues that make people feel unable to actively pursue work. Applications to phase 3 highlighted that finding and accessing appropriate services, offline, is time-consuming and can be costly where travel is required.

The Employability 'Pipeline'

In theorizing the potential impact of digital access on people's employment prospects, we referred to the model of the 'employability pipeline'¹¹. This model shows where different people might be on their route to employment and the kinds of activities associated with particular stages. While recognising that the pipeline model cannot fully capture different people's experiences of (un)employment, it provides a useful lens through which to consider the different ways in which digital connectivity could help people (who want to) get closer to finding work. The model also plainly illustrates that gaining employment is an incremental process, with some people more 'job ready' than others; people's needs differ depending on their position in the pipeline. Thus, the success of digital interventions should not simply be gauged by measuring job attainment in the short-term, but also by progress made towards being 'work-ready'.

¹⁰ [Employment health inequalities - gov.uk](#)

¹¹ [1 | Employability in Scotland](#)

Figure 1: The 'Employability Pipeline'



For people at stages one and two, who are furthest from employment, digital engagement might simply be about starting to use connected devices, building confidence, connecting with others and starting to learn about the kinds of support that are accessible online. Stages three and four would involve more explicitly work-related activities; gaining relevant skills and qualifications and then using the internet to assist in writing CVs, searching and applying for jobs. Finally, someone who is in work might require further digital skills support in order to progress in their career.

Evaluation Approach

For each of the first the phases of Connecting Scotland, the same methods were used to evaluate the impact of the programme for users. These methods will be briefly outlined here. Greater detail on the methodology can be found in either of the Phase 1 or Phase 2 evaluation reports. The methods applied were designed to find out about users' experiences of the job market and of using digital technology, including, in both instances, barriers or difficulties encountered. The central data collection methods of the research have been carried out at various points throughout users' engagement with the programme (over the first year, or so) so that changes and impacts can be measured over time.

Data from Applications

Organisations submitting applications described the situations and needs of people with whom they worked as well as outlining the expected benefits that involvement in Connecting Scotland would have. Applications are not a neutral data source as organisations are representing the interests of those on whose behalf they are applying. Nevertheless, when taken together, information from applications provides a broad understanding of the issues faced by people in need of employability support and who are digitally excluded, as well as highlighting some of the groups most affected.

There were 525 applications; a sample of 226 was analysed.

Surveys

Connecting Scotland administers 2 main online surveys for users to complete. The first – the 'welcome survey' - is available to complete shortly after users have received their devices and seeks to understand people's experience of going online and using digital devices, as well as what people hope to achieve through involvement in the programme. For phase 3, we included specific questions on people's job-seeking status and barriers to employment with which they identified.

Users are invited to complete a second survey – the 'experience and impact survey' - when they have had their Connecting Scotland devices for between 9 and 12 months. The main purpose of this survey is to capture impacts and/or progress towards positive outcomes that have resulted from involvement with Connecting Scotland. Again, for phase 3, a number of questions were included that asked about people's employment prospects, and the extent to which equipment and support from Connecting Scotland had been helpful.

Each survey drew its sample from a cohort of Connecting Scotland users in phase 3. It was not a panel study, meaning that the same respondents will not necessarily have responded to both surveys. It is probable that several users *did* respond to both surveys, but participation is voluntary and respondents are anonymous.

The profile of respondents to both the welcome survey and the impact survey was similar. Respondents to the surveys were generally younger, with 60% being aged

16-44. The impact survey shows a 60%-40% gender split in favour of women. Around a third of respondents, to both surveys, were living alone. The biggest demographic difference between the surveys is that there were fewer households with children represented in the impact survey. The impact survey included a question relating to personal circumstances that was not included in the welcome survey. This showed that a quarter of respondents were single parents and a quarter were either disabled, or lived with someone else who was disabled. Categories were not mutually exclusive.

Figure 2: Survey response rate

Survey	Users recorded	Responses	Response rate per user	Date closed
Welcome - Employability	9,143	591	6.4%	30/6/2022
Impact - Employability	9,143	447	4.9%	07/03/2023

Qualitative Interviews

In between the delivery of the welcome and impact surveys, a sample of users took part in semi-structured qualitative interviews to provide more in-depth accounts of their experiences of job-seeking and Connecting Scotland support. Interviewees were recruited through contact with applicant organisations to build a sample of different users to include people of varying age, sex and job-seeking experience. The sample included disabled people, older (60+) job-seekers, people with experience of domestic abuse and people with dependent children.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain deeper insights into the aspects of support that people found more, or less, helpful as well as to understand more about how people had been using their devices. Interviews also present the opportunity to surface findings which researchers may not have anticipated.

Interviews were arranged at a time convenient to the participant and conducted over the phone, with a third person on the call to take detailed notes of the conversation.

Number of interviews = 18

Limitations of Approach

While all research participants are people who have received Connecting Scotland support, each stage of data collection is based upon a discrete sample of voluntary respondents. It is possible for someone to have completed both surveys and

participated in an interview, however, the overall approach to research is not engineered to monitor change for individual users. Furthermore, because survey respondents remain anonymous, there is no way of identifying individuals from one data collection point to the next.

This is not a disadvantage, per se; it simply means that we are assessing change and impact at an aggregate level and using the findings to understand commonalities in experiences and outcomes across the cohort.

Throughout the research for each of the first three phases, we have consistently observed relatively low response rates to surveys, despite pursuing a number of strategies to boost participation. This does not invalidate the survey data that we have, though we could have greater confidence in the wider validity of the results with a more robust sample size.

The sample of qualitative interviewees is, by necessity, small and bound by time and resources. We have succeeded in achieving a sample that includes a range of demographics and characteristics. However, due to the approach to participant recruitment, interviewees were ultimately reached via only a few organisations. This might mean that there is a greater degree of similarity in people's experience of support than there might be in the cohort more widely.

Findings

Barriers to online use

Most Connecting Scotland users who participated in the research for this phase had some prior experience of going online and using digital devices. The majority, however, had experienced constraints on the extent of their digital participation, with cost being the main barrier. In the welcome survey, a majority of respondents (57%) identified cost of devices as something that prevented or limited their use of the internet, while 42% said that paying for internet/data was too expensive (respondents could select more than one option). Data from qualitative interviews with users corroborates this, with more than half reporting that, other than smartphones, access to digital devices was limited to outdated laptops which were described as slow, broken, or malfunctioning, but which people could not afford to replace. Several interviewees also mentioned that they struggled to afford mobile data and so had inconsistent, or limited, internet access.

As with the previous phase of Connecting Scotland, the cost of devices was more commonly cited as a barrier than the cost of data and there were more ipads and chromebooks distributed than 'MiFi' devices (personal, portable wifi). This, perhaps, reflects that people prioritise paying for internet data so that they can maintain a connection, even if they are connecting on inadequate devices. It may also be that people on low incomes, or who are in poverty, find it more difficult to budget for one-off, expensive purchases like a new laptop or tablet. 63% of welcome survey respondents cited lack of access to a device as their reason for getting involved with Connecting Scotland, compared to 31% saying they had no internet access. The following open-text response to the welcome survey question on people's reasons for involvement with the programme illustrates how the cost of new devices can significantly impair people's use of the internet:

"I don't have a computer and my mobile phone screen was broken, so I had to work using my broken device for nearly a year as I cannot afford a new device."

For the majority of research participants (53% of welcome survey respondents and around half of interviewees) smartphones had been the primary means of accessing the internet before they received a digital device from Connecting Scotland. However, there are several online activities, especially those related to employability, for which mobile phones are inherently unsuitable; for instance editing and uploading a CV. These will be discussed at greater length later in this report. Several of the comments in the welcome survey show that people's involvement in Connecting Scotland was driven by a desire for a device other than their smartphone:

-My laptop doesn't work, and I hate using smart phones.

-My smartphone had limited storage and I found it difficult to use a small touchscreen to access things I may have wanted to.

That so many respondents lacked an appropriate digital device suitable for a range of purposes demonstrates that simply having an internet connection is not sufficient for people to be able to fully engage online. Furthermore, even where people had their own personal wifi or data, this was not always consistent or reliable. As already noted, some people could only afford to pay for limited data, but other circumstances can also affect people's connectivity. One interviewee, who had experienced homelessness, explained that their access to wifi had varied depending upon the hostel they were staying in. Another told us that the building they lived in was contracted to a particular internet provider and that they were not able to change, despite signal being patchy.

Though less prevalent than in the previous phase (2) of Connecting Scotland (where more users lived with dependent children), sharing devices within a household was mentioned, too, as something that had inhibited people's ability to make full use of online facilities. An interviewee told us that, having only a smartphone of their own, they would use their child's laptop to access the internet. A number of open text responses in the welcome survey also show that sharing devices was an issue for people who wanted to use the internet to pursue work:

-“I was sharing my daughter's laptop for my online studying”

-“I had no device of my own to do work on or for my children to use for schoolwork when COVID closed all the schools.”

A significant number of survey respondents said they had accessed the internet at a public place - a library, community centre or cafe (29%) and a further 22% said that they used internet at a friend or relative's house. It should be noted that respondents could select multiple responses, so they may also have had access to a smartphone, for example. However, some interview responses suggest that access via other people or organisations was some people's primary means of getting online:

“I didn't have a device; if I wanted to go online, I would ask friends to use their device(s).”

Two other interviewees said that they had to use computers at the library as they did not have home broadband and only had devices that were very outdated and faulty. Using public facilities entails travel time and costs and a few people mentioned that use of library computers is time limited.

Although cost presented the principle barrier to online access, a significant minority of people reported issues relating to their capacity to use digital devices. 13% of welcome survey respondents said that they found 'computer devices difficult to use' while 5% responded that they needed additional equipment to facilitate their online use (for example, a screen reader) but did not know how to use it. A further 8% said that they *did not have access* to such equipment, though lack of access arguably reflects, again, a cost issue rather than an issue with people's facility with devices.

The majority of survey respondents described themselves as 'confident', or 'very confident' internet users (69%), 13% said that they were not very, or not at all

confident while 18% selected a 'neutral' option. While lack of digital confidence should not be overlooked, the research suggests that, for most people in this cohort, lack of skills or knowledge presented less of a barrier to online access than actually being able to afford the appropriate equipment and connectivity.

Barriers to employment

Research with people supported in phase 3 has highlighted a wide range of factors affecting people's ability to pursue and enter work. In the welcome survey, we devised a question with response options that broadly reflected the stages of the employability pipeline. The responses to this question show that every stage on the pipeline is well represented among the cohort of users, although the most prominent were stages 2 and 4.

Figure 3: Job Situation

Which of the following statements best describes how you feel, at the moment, about getting a job?



When asked about the specific things that made it difficult for people to find work, a wide range of responses was, again, reflected. In this case, people could select more than one option and the relatively high response rate to each implies that respondents often faced more than one barrier.

Interestingly, the most commonly selected were lack of qualifications (51%) and lack of experience (49%) which does not seem to correspond to people's reported employability situation. Only 12% of people identified as needing more workplace

training, skills or experience. This discrepancy is perhaps partly explained by people reporting what they consider to be the most immediate barriers to their prospects of employment. For example, someone answering that they are not sure what support they need, or that there are things in their personal life that need attention before they are able to pursue work, may also feel that they are underqualified but that this is not their most pressing concern. It is also possible that people recognise a lack of qualifications or experience as barriers to their gaining some types of work, but do not perceive these issues as central to their securing the type of work they plan to pursue.

Other responses broadly related to personal circumstances or to structural barriers to working.

Personal Circumstances

- Experiencing difficulties with mental health – 42%
- Experiencing difficulties with physical health - 30%
- Having caring responsibilities that would be hard to fit around a job – 29%
- Having to spend time dealing with money worries – 25%

Structural Barriers

- Not many jobs available in the local area – 31%
- The cost of transport to travel for work is too high - 24%
- Lack of available transport to travel for work – 21%
- Facing discrimination due to ethnicity, gender, age, other characteristic – 15%
- Not speaking English as a first language – 10%

It should be acknowledged that this is a simplistic classification. Depending upon the nature of the condition, it could be argued that individual mental and physical health issues also represent a structural barrier, in that adjustments that help reduce the impact of these issues on work may not be in place. Similarly, caring commitments *might* be accommodated by flexible working conditions.

In qualitative interviews (which, of course, comprise a smaller sample of respondents than the survey), the most commonly expressed barrier to employment (by 1/3 interviewees) was having a physical health issue or disability that limited the kind of work people could do. One interviewee told us that physical attendance at interviews was difficult due to their mobility issues. This illustrates how being digitally excluded compounds the disadvantages some people face when seeking employment. Not only was this respondent limited by a physical condition, they suffered further by lacking access to an alternative (digital) means of communication. This interviewee did ultimately successfully secure a job after attending an interview online, using their Connecting Scotland device.

The research highlights a number of similar instances where the barriers to people's online use have direct consequences for their employment prospects. One interviewee who had previously conducted job searches and made applications using library computers explained how the time limits imposed on use meant that they would apply for jobs "as quickly as possible", without thoroughly reading job descriptions.

A respondent to the welcome survey explained how having to share a device had hindered their ability to focus on finding work:

"Sharing with two of my children made it difficult to manage my own uni studies and job searching, as things would disappear when they were using it that I needed. I now have the ability to job hunt and study knowing my CV etc. are safe and the new device is up to date."

Device functionality was a common factor identified as restricting people's digital capabilities and, thereby, their ability to fully engage in employment related activities. Lots of people who had been relying on smartphones for internet access mentioned the ways in which those devices were inadequate for several tasks:

- "I couldn't access emails, job searches etc. through my phone so this laptop makes things so much easier"
- "I only had smartphone to apply for jobs, which was very awkward to attach CV etc."

(open text responses – welcome survey)

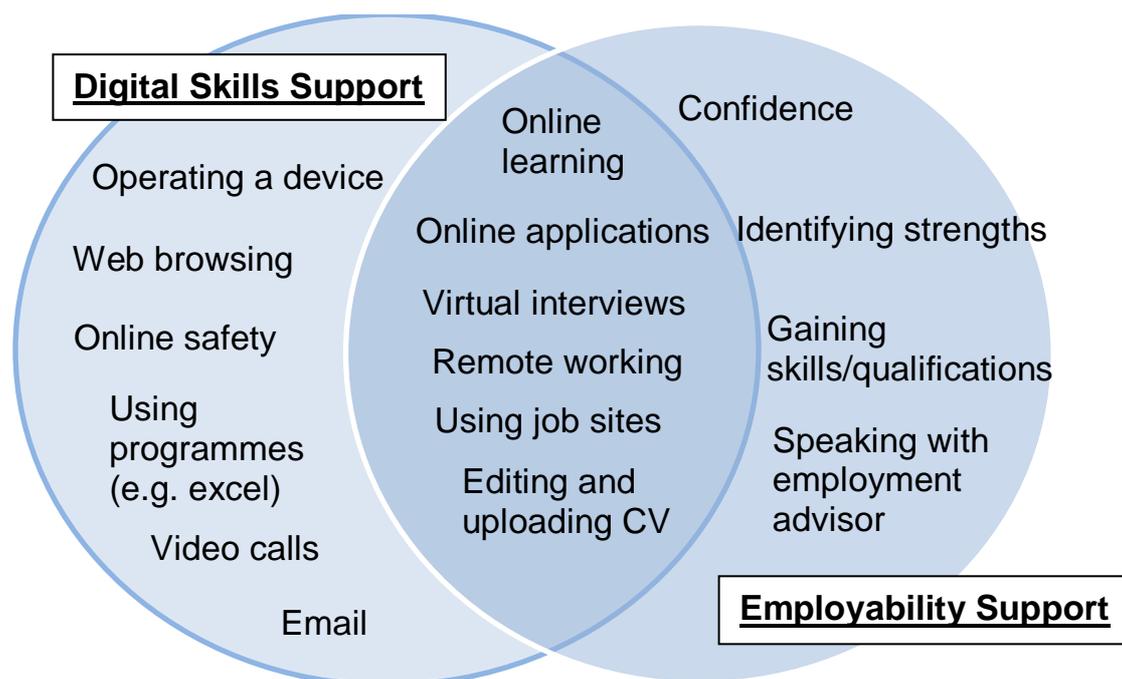
The range of responses illustrates the varied, complex and sometimes multiple ways in which people are disadvantaged in finding work. Enhancing people's digital capacities can potentially alleviate many of these barriers in one form or another, and in some cases, simply owning a reliable device can have an instant impact. However, digital inclusion is one element among many that is needed to make it easier for people to progress towards, and secure work. For example, for people who identified their caring responsibilities as something hindering their ability to find suitable work, online access can allow them to explore a wider range of employment, childcare and transport options. However, more widely, there needs to be an adequate supply of jobs which offer flexible working and access to affordable and flexible childcare for people to take-up meaningful employment.

Support

Phase 3 of the programme was unique in that it had the specific aim of helping people into, or towards, employment where the previous 2 phases had less prescribed aims. This means that people's support needs were oriented towards activities supporting their job prospects.

The relationship between digital skills and employment is expressed in the diagram at figure 4.

Figure 4: Intersection of digital skills support and employability support



There are generic digital skills that people should possess to be able to successfully use technology to gain employment, but which are not exclusively related to employability (on the left of the diagram). There are also activities that can help people towards realising their employment goals but which do not necessarily involve possessing or using digital skills (though which may be aided by digital engagement; right side of the diagram). At the intersection of these 2 spheres are employment-related activities for which use of the internet and digital technology is necessary.

People in phase 3 received equipment via organisations who applied to Connecting Scotland on their behalf. Staff from these organisations were responsible for providing both employability support and digital skills support (digital champion role), though, of course, people could seek additional support from other sources, if they wished. Because digital skills support (device operation and internet access) was offered simultaneously with employability support (CV development, identifying appropriate learning), it can be difficult to delineate users' specific support needs. Many reported activities involve using digital technology to pursue employability goals. For example, practising a job interview online requires presentational and interpersonal skills (that would be needed in offline interaction), as well as knowledge of how to use video-conferencing technology and it is not always simple to distinguish the aspects with which users needed greater support.

In interviews, however, some people we talked with did make a clear distinction between digital skills and employability support. For instance, one interviewee told us they had not required any help to use their device or the internet, but that they *did* want support with writing cover letters and practising interviews. Of course, generic advice for these kinds of activities is available online but, arguably, individualised support is of greater benefit. Another interviewee asserted that they

were 'self-sufficient' in researching jobs and learning to use relevant software and so had not sought digital skills support (though aware it was available). This interviewee, though, stated that they "did not know" what additional support they needed to make a successful application.

Most research respondents (both interviewees and those completing the surveys) described themselves as confident on the internet; people consistently expressed in interviews that they were aware of the offer of digital skills support but felt they did not require this. However, around half of the interviewees indicated that the employment support they had received included getting help with online activities directly relating to finding work. Most commonly, this took the form of people getting help writing and structuring a CV, and then being assisted to upload it to job websites. This kind of assistance blurs the distinction between digital skills support and employment support and illustrates the centrality of digital technology to securing work. Although the interviews provide a relatively limited sample, the data perhaps suggests that, while most people possessed foundational digital skills and knowledge, there were gaps in terms of effective online use to support employability. One interviewee described themselves as confident using the internet and their device but struggled with job websites and uploading their CV. Another interviewee, (despite having successfully applied for a job) indicated that they would not be confident navigating online to find work if it became necessary:

"If I lost this job I don't know what I would do, what jobsites to look on et cetera"

While self-reported confidence in going online and using devices was fairly high, a minority of interviewees had had limited experience with digital devices and needed help with fundamental activities such as using email or common applications like 'zoom'.

"I learned to shop online, how to share photographs online, FaceTime with friends and my daughter, use email ..."

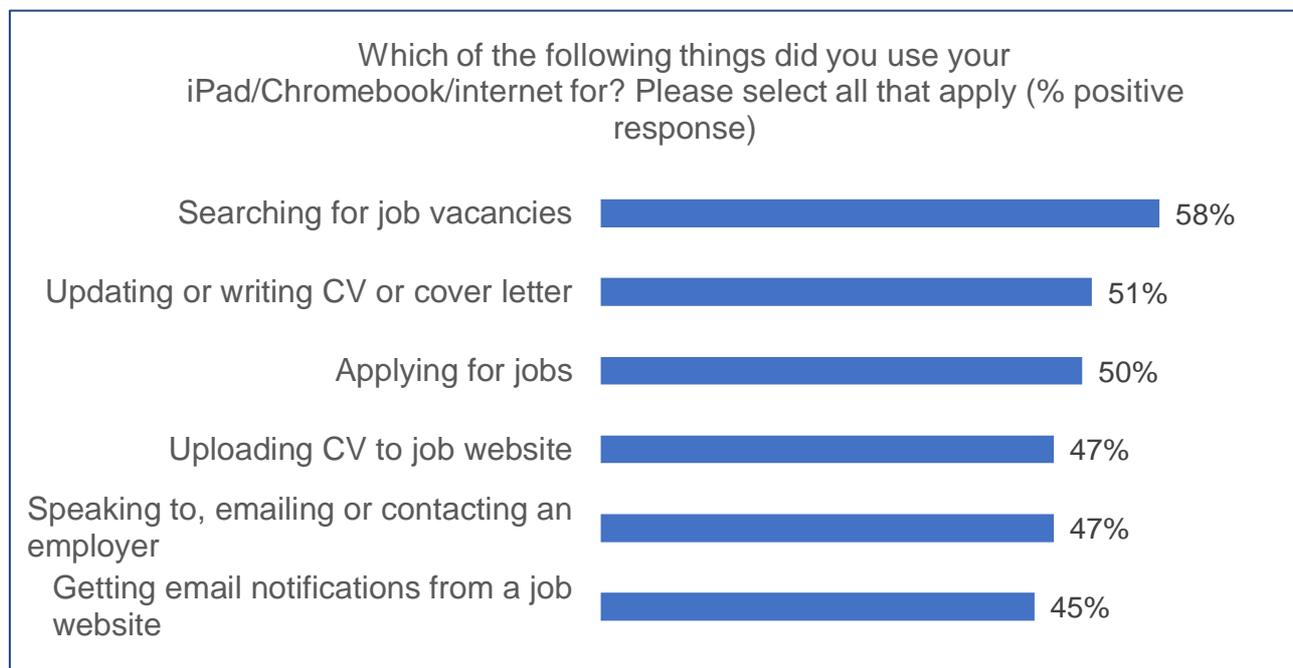
Almost all interviewees were in receipt of employability support, or expressed a need for this kind of support. However, for a few people, simply having a device (and means of connectivity where required) allowed them to undertake job seeking activities with minimal additional help, either in terms of employability advice, or digital skills. One interviewee said that they soon taught themselves to use the Chromebook and were able to use online sources of support, for example, a 'CV creator' website.

Use of Connectivity and Device

The 'experience and impact' survey, administered after people had owned their devices for some time (around 12 months for most respondents), shows that people had used their devices and connectivity in a range of different ways (people could select multiple options). This reflects the findings of the welcome survey which showed that barriers to employability were multiple and varied and that people identified with each different stage on the employability pipeline.

While a breadth of activities was reported, the most popular were concerned *directly* with job-seeking; searching online for vacancies, working on CVs and making applications.

Figure 5: Employability activities on devices



This is broadly in line with people’s intentions when asked, in the ‘welcome’ survey about things they would be interested in using their devices for. 60% of respondents said they intended to use their device to make online applications and 57% to search for job vacancies. These kinds of activities are strongly reflected, too, in the qualitative interviews where most people with whom we spoke were actively looking, and applying, for work.

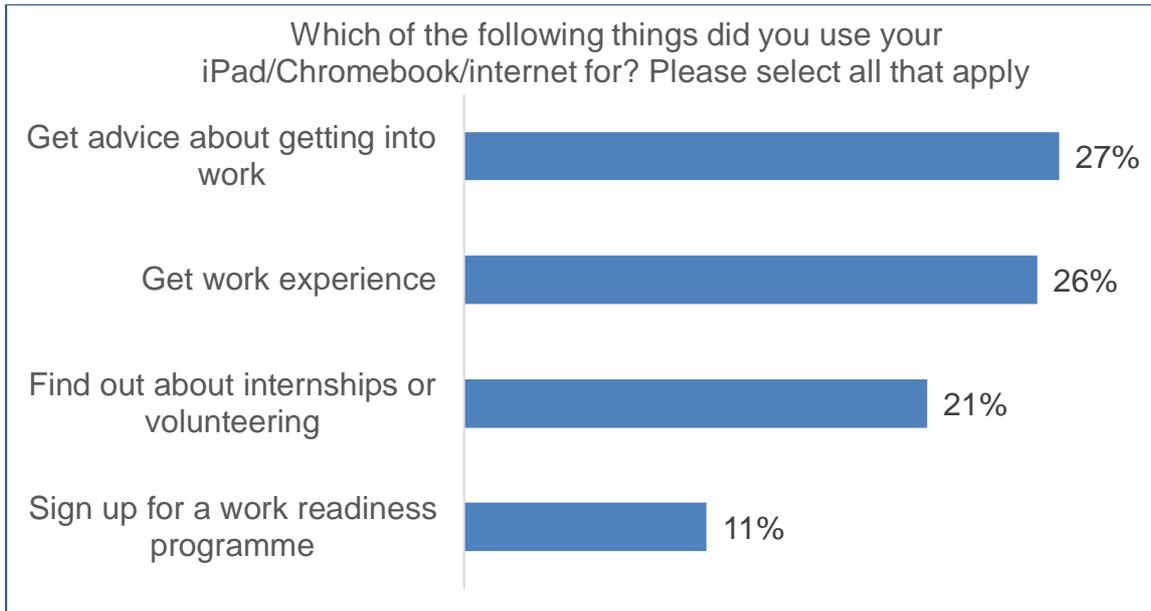
The next most commonly reported activity for which people had been using their devices and connectivity was working towards a qualification (41%) which was also frequently mentioned in the welcome survey in open text responses to the question ‘What made you want to get involved in this programme?’:

-“I was starting my SVQ3 [Scottish Vocational Qualification] in health and social care and was finding it hard to do this using my phone.”

-“I was really struggling to type up college work/assessments on the devices I had without there being written errors so the device helps me see my work clearer on a bigger screen.”

Other than formal study, activities associated with preparing, more generally, for work were less frequently reported as things for which people had been using their devices. For example; finding out about internships, volunteering and work experience.

Figure 6: Lesser reported employability activities



There was a relatively high incidence of people reporting that they had used their connection to find information or advice about health and/or mental health (38%), although fewer people said they had actually accessed health services online. This reflects that poor health is a significant barrier to people’s ability to access employment. One interviewee told us:

“The first step in my journey is to get my health issues under control; I’m totally stuck until I get this under control.”

This interviewee said that they had been using their device to help manage their health condition by keeping track of their medical documents and appointments. At the same time, they were using their device to research career options for when they were recovered.

Other Activities

Research participants also reported various other things for which they were using their devices and connectivity which were not necessarily associated with job-seeking (although which may indirectly benefit employability prospects, for example, by helping to improve people’s mental health). Just over a third of impact survey respondents said that they had used their device for online banking and 27% said they had accessed money advice.

In interviews, people described a range of things they had been able to do on their devices which had had a positive effect on their finances or wellbeing. One person told us that they had found an online ‘tool library’ from which they had rented tools in order to renovate their new accommodation. Another told us that, as well as successfully applying for a job using their device, they had also learnt a foreign language and how to make pizzas online. Interviewees also said that they used online applications to stay connected with friends and family. Research in the

previous phases of Connecting Scotland has highlighted the importance of online social and leisure activities for maintaining good mental health. In this phase, over two thirds of impact survey respondents agreed (34%) or strongly agreed (33%) that getting online and having a device had helped to improve their mental health.

Device Functionality

As with previous phases of Connecting Scotland, many people commented that certain features of their new device meant that they could do things that were either difficult, or unachievable, with their previous means of connection – namely smartphones. Activities like editing, saving and uploading CVs were especially identified as being easier. People using digital devices for studying reported, too, that attending classes online, and writing and submitting written work would have been all but impossible without the devices they received through the programme.

The enabling features of devices are discussed at greater length in the [phase 2 evaluation report](#). Worth mentioning here is that, in phase 3, people appeared to have fewer reservations about the devices they received than in previous phases. This is likely because of the specific focus of this phase on employability. Users' needs were more defined, which meant that additional support received alongside ownership of devices was more focused and, in most cases, the devices awarded were chosen to meet employability-based needs. This reinforces the importance of identifying devices that most appropriately fulfil the goals of digital inclusion in different circumstances.

Impact and Outcomes

Change in Work Situation

Both the welcome and impact surveys included the question (derived from the employability pipeline model) asking respondents to select an option that best described their feelings about getting a job (see fig.3). Comparing the spread of answers between the two surveys gives an indication of if, and how, things have changed for phase 3 users.

In the **welcome** survey:

- 14% of respondents were in a job but wanted to find other work.
- 72% were looking to get into work, split evenly between those who would be considered 'work ready' and those that would not, according to the pipeline.
- 14% did not identify with any of the statements – open text responses indicate that these respondents:
 - were studying and would seek work after completion
 - had caring commitments
 - felt too unwell to work
 - had found a job since in the time since receiving their device

Where people said they had already found work by the time the welcome survey was carried out, the extent to which people's digital devices contributed to this was largely unstated, however a few clearly identified the difference that Connecting Scotland support had already made:

"I start a new job in May as a Support Practitioner. Had it not been for the gift of the Chromebook and data package, I would not have been able to even apply for this job."

In the Experience and Impact survey:

- 29% of people said they were in employment; 17% were happy with the job they were in while 12% were looking for opportunities to move into a different job or position.
- 60% were still looking to get into work
- 13% identified with none of the statements; open text comments show a similar pattern to that in the welcome survey.

Overall, it would appear that there is a noticeable difference in the number of people in work between the 2 surveys. In the impact survey, 17% of people said they were in a job where they were happy and 12% fewer people were actively job-seeking than indicated in the welcome survey. Of the 29% who were in work, exactly half said that having a device and/or connection from Connecting Scotland had been *essential* in helping them get a job; a further 44% said that it had been helpful. When asked about what the biggest change had been from receiving equipment through Connecting Scotland, many people expanded on the role that their device and the internet had played in securing work:

- "The device helped me to find everything I needed to know to apply for jobs."
- "The internet helped me to find jobs I can apply for, and making my CV which helped me a lot to get a job."
- "The laptop [Chromebook] and Wi-Fi you gave me helped me to get a job I wanted. I am so happy."

Persistent Barriers to Employment

Looking in more detail at the responses, in both surveys, of those still seeking work potentially provides an insight into where digital access has been most effective. There is a clear difference in the number of people identifying with the option corresponding to stage 4 on the employability pipeline: *'I feel ready to start a job but I need to find opportunities that are right for me, work on applications and prepare for interviews'*. In the welcome survey, 23% of people selected this option; in the impact survey, this number almost halved to 12%. This implies that having a device and/or connectivity has provided a solution for those people who were work ready but needed an effective way to search and apply for jobs.

The change in the frequency to which the other 'out of work' responses were selected is, however, minimal. Indeed, the statement relating to stage 2 of the pipeline – *'I would like to find a job but there are things in my personal life (such as my mental health, my financial situation) that I need to deal with first'* – had almost exactly the same response rate across both surveys (26.8% and 26.4%) and was the most regularly selected.

This could indicate that either digital access has little to no effect on helping to improve people's personal circumstances, or that the effects are not as immediately demonstrable. Other evidence from the research suggests that the latter is more likely, not least the fact that the majority (72%) of respondents to the impact survey said that they thought their chances of getting a job had improved 'a little' (37%) or 'a lot' (35%) since receiving support from Connecting Scotland. 67% of respondents also agreed, or strongly agreed that 'getting online and having a device' had helped them improve their mental health.

Personal issues, such as problems with mental health or finances, represent a much more intractable barrier to employment than, for example, having difficulties submitting applications. It is almost certainly the case that, though online access can contribute to people improving their situations, this is just one element of the support that may be needed. It would be unrealistic to expect online access, alone, to remedy people's personal difficulties, especially within the relatively short time frame in which this research was carried out.

The 23% of impact survey respondents who said that their chances of getting a job had stayed the same or got worse were invited to provide open-text comments to explain their situation. These comments suggest that some of the issues that people face, that affect their ability to work, are very difficult to overcome. The majority of the comments reference mental health problems.

"My mental health isn't good at moment and also my family life isn't good either. I would love to work or do education. I've tried and failed because of my home situation."

38% of respondents said that they had used their device to find information or advice about health and/or mental health, with 29% saying they had accessed mental health services online. Nevertheless, some people's responses demonstrate that addressing the barriers they face goes beyond the scope of the programme:

- "I have personal medical issues that make getting a job harder so although the Chromebook has helped me, it has not affected my employment."
- "I feel if I was to get any job with 16 hours that I would feel I would initially need support. I see a psychiatrist for my mental health although I feel it would be very helpful if I had more support, e.g. support worker or PCN [Primary Care Network]."
- "I have learning disabilities and not many employers are sympathetic to the restricted work I can do."

When asked what additional support might be helpful, a number of respondents mentioned specific assistance for their mental health needs:

“Someone to help me with my mental health and be able to show me that, while dealing with my mental health, I can still look and be able to keep a job.”

As well as health difficulties, people cited childcare commitments as an issue that made it hard for them to find suitable work, indicating that the availability of accessible and flexible work may be lacking:

“Because I have to take and pick up my child every day, and I don’t have a driving license to drive to work. I want to get a part time job very near to my home.”

Although a number of people did also say that they *had* managed to use their device to find work that fitted in with childcare:

“The access to internet has helped so much with finding a job suited around my children.”

The vast majority of research participants reported positive impacts, on both their digital and job-seeking capabilities, resulting from the digital support provided by Connecting Scotland. The research, though, also illustrates the limits to what this support, alone, can achieve. As one impact survey respondent succinctly put it:

“There are circumstances stronger than having a tablet.”

A couple of people that were interviewed seemed to be uncertain as to what further, or additional, support they might benefit from:

“I don’t have a clue; I need something to help me get a job...I don’t know what I need to brush up on but I know something is not working”.

Other Impacts

As well as benefits directly related to job-seeking, research participants reported a variety of other positive impacts that owning a device and/or having a connection had had for them. These included practical benefits such as being able to shop online, potentially saving time and money, and using online banking (reported by over a third of impact survey participants). Others said that other people in their household had benefitted, particularly children who were either using the device themselves, or whose parents were better able to support their schoolwork. One respondent to the impact survey said the biggest change since receiving their equipment had been:

“Enhancing my skills, enabling me to help my children with their homework and learning and providing added digital skills for my children.”

41% of impact survey respondents said they were using their devices and/or connection to gain a qualification. People who were not yet actively looking for a job but were studying in order to be better qualified consistently reported that their devices had made it significantly easier to participate in education:

“It has helped with my studies a huge amount and has changed the ability for me to learn as I can access my classes from home when required.”

Something repeatedly reported was the effect that involvement in the programme had had on people’s feelings of personal wellbeing. In particular, people reported feeling more confident since receiving support through Connecting Scotland. Many people expressed a kind of *practical* confidence, feeling better skilled and equipped to pursue work:

- “[it has] Given me more confidence on using internet and bigger screen for my eyes instead of on my phone. Helped apply for jobs and online interviews.”
- “More confident in using internet, sorting out my money worries.”

For others, the confidence gained was expressed as a more general sense of hopefulness and purpose:

“[It has] Given me a boost and a direction/hope for the future. Really positive for my mental health. More confidence.”

It is not always apparent how involvement in the programme leads to feelings of increased confidence, although a number of people suggested that the ability to connect easily to people and groups had been significant.

“Boosted my confidence, keep me from being lonely and I get to be more involved in my local community.”

The following quotation suggests that becoming confident using the device itself can generate confidence in other areas of life.

“Being able to gain the confidence to utilise the device and join others online, this has allowed me to gain a level of confidence throughout my life which has helped me to develop friendships, participate in new hobbies.”

A number of responses from the impact survey and from qualitative interviews suggest that, alongside the use of a device, interpersonal relationships with support staff could be important to building confidence. One interviewee said:

“I used to have low confidence and [low] self-esteem ... I felt really supported by [digital champion] and the team – they didn’t make me feel stupid.”

Personal confidence is arguably an overlooked factor in people’s ability to pursue and secure work and may not be an outcome readily associated with having digital access. Perhaps some of the confidence reported stems from being included in

something which most people are able to take for granted, as implied in the following quotations; the first from an interviewee, the second from a respondent to the impact survey:

- “It’s really good that Connecting Scotland supports people with digital technology. During COVID people became isolated especially people who can’t afford to access the web. It’s been amazing for me and it’s definitely improved my confidence. Some people assume people know all about digital technology - but many don’t and these days you need those skills to get a job.”
- “I feel normal now, like other young people in my area. Everyone has internet and a device, I felt left out before having neither.”

Conclusions

Employability Benefits of Digital Inclusion

The research with users in phase 3 of Connecting Scotland indicates that having access to the internet and digital devices has, overall, positively impacted people's employment prospects. 17% of respondents to the impact survey reported that they were in a job with which they were happy. Those who had found employment since getting involved with Connecting Scotland said that their device was either essential (50%) or helpful (44%) in securing this work. Of those who were still looking for work, almost three quarters said that they felt their chances of getting a job had improved since receiving support from Connecting Scotland. Some people were not yet *actively* job seeking, but were using their devices to help them participate in education and/or gain qualifications which would enhance their employability.

The most apparent way that devices and connectivity have impacted upon people's job-seeking is by enabling people to search and apply for jobs more easily. Being able to edit and upload CVs was an important element that helped people make applications. In the impact survey, there was a notable decrease in the number of people saying they were ready for work but needed to find the right opportunities and work on applications.

Systemic Context

Digital inclusion is a fundamental facet in supporting more people into work. This research has shown that, pragmatically, access to digital devices helps people to find and apply for work, as well as participate in study to enhance employment prospects. More generally, digital inclusion can increase people's confidence and improve their mental wellbeing. However, the research also indicates that the benefits of digital inclusion can be limited by the wider contexts in which people are looking for work.

Childcare, for example, was often cited as a factor that made it difficult for people to find work. In the welcome survey, 29% of people said that fitting a job around their caring responsibilities would be hard. In the impact survey, a few people said that having a device *had* helped them find work that fit around their family commitments, though others still identified childcare as restricting their employment prospects.

Lack, and unaffordability, of transport were also identified as barriers to employment, along with a perception that there are limited jobs available to people, locally. These factors together indicate that the physical accessibility of work is an issue. Online access may help, to a degree, in allowing people to assess the transport options available to them but the costs of travel, and geographic disparities in job availability, are more fundamental barriers to employability.

Health Issues

Difficulties with both mental and physical health were persistently identified, throughout the research for this phase of the programme, as obstacles to people gaining employment. Uncovering the specific nature of people's health issues was not in the scope of this research, though it is evident that there was a great degree of variation between people's circumstances. In some cases, people simply cannot undertake work due to health conditions although this would not be expected to be a widespread issue, here, given that people's involvement with the programme is based upon their seeking employment. It would be reasonable to assume that, in most cases, health issues were either temporary, or were not accommodated by the kinds of work that people were seeking. Examples of both can be found in the data; one interviewee was using his device to manage medical appointments and documents to 'get his health under control' before re-entering employment, while a respondent to the impact survey said that employers were unsympathetic to their learning disabilities. Another interviewee was able to use their device and connectivity to successfully interview for a job online, overcoming the mobility issues that made physical attendance at interviews problematic.

The prevalence of poor *mental* health, found in this research, is striking. 42% of welcome survey respondents said that they experienced difficulties with their mental health that presented a barrier to entering employment. The majority of research participants reported positive impacts on their mental health from involvement in the programme. However, in the impact survey, several people who said their job situation had not improved cited their mental health as the primary reason for this.

Evidently, health (and mental health in particular) difficulties are a significant obstacle to employability and need to be addressed when supporting people into work. More in-depth research would be needed to understand the types of support that would be most impactful in helping to tackle health-based barriers to work. The research, here, indicates that online access can provide some solutions, but that there may be more employers can do to accommodate some circumstances. Some of the responses to the impact survey indicate that people experiencing mental health difficulties are eager to work, but would benefit from more person-centred support to help them navigate the jobs market.

Importance of Holistic Support

Digital skills and internet access are both becoming essential to finding and maintaining work. Consistent and reliable internet access enables people to search and apply for opportunities in ways that simply are not possible offline, while possession of basic digital skills is desirable, if not essential, to most roles. Supporting people into employment necessarily involves an element of digital support and, in some cases, activities relating to employment are inseparable from digital skills. Unemployment and digital exclusion are mutually reinforcing. Where people are digitally excluded *and* looking for work, both issues should be addressed simultaneously.

For some people supported in phase 3 of Connecting Scotland, having a connected device was, alone, sufficient in helping them into work. For others, it is apparent that, for digital access to be most impactful, it needs to form part of a more holistic package of support.

Annex A: Connecting Scotland Delivery Phases

Phase	Date phase announced	Funds	Target group	Target numbers	Delivered
1	May '20	£5M	People at a high clinical risk of COVID-19	9,000	April – July 2020
2	Aug '20	£15M	Young care leavers & families with children	23,000	August 2020 – April 2021
(2) Winter Support	Nov '20	£4.3M	Socially isolated / older and disabled people	5,000	December 2020 – March 2021
3	Jun '21	£26.6M	Employability Digitally excluded / low-income households	23,000	June 2021 – September 2021 August – December 2021

Annex B: Support offer

Devices

Organisations could request the following for their clients:

- an iPad: Chosen as an easy-to-use device with accessibility features that would meet the needs of older clients who would be using the device to stay in touch and access information
- a Chromebook: suitable for clients with a wider range of digital needs who may need to produce documents (e.g. create a C.V.) or use other applications requiring extensive use of a keyboard
- a MiFi device: an easy way to provide internet access without the need to have a broadband connection installed and allowing multiple users to connect simultaneously. During the first lockdown, a solution was needed that avoided face-to-face contact e.g. with a broadband installer

Digital Champions

To optimise users' experience of the programme, Connecting Scotland coordinates digital skills support via 'digital champions'. Digital champions are normally staff who work in front line positions for the organisations that have applied to Connecting Scotland and so will already possess knowledge and experience of working directly with user groups. Training and a range of resources for digital champions are provided for free as part of the Connecting Scotland programme. This covers device-specific training as well as materials to enhance core digital skills.

The role of digital champions is to help people who get devices through Connecting Scotland to do things online like:

- connecting a device to the internet using the Wi-Fi settings, and putting in the password when they need to
- sharing documents by attaching them to an email
- understanding that not all online information and content that they see is reliable

The aim is that, with support from digital champions, learners will be able to use the internet safely, confidently and effectively. People receiving Connecting Scotland support, however, are under no obligation to engage with their digital champion. More information about applicant organisations' experience of identifying and training digital champions can be found in this report: [Connecting Scotland - implementation and early impact](#).

Connecting Scotland users were also able to phone a free helpline for additional general support. The [Connecting Scotland website](#) contains further information, useful links and videos.

Annex C: Application Process

The application process for Connecting Scotland worked in the following way:

1. Third Sector organisations and local authorities applied for Connecting Scotland support on behalf of their clients.
2. Applications were made to SCVO (Connecting Scotland's delivery partner) who convened panels to assess the applications in partnership with designated local authority leads.
3. Applications were assessed on the basis that appropriate client groups had been identified who met the target criteria, and confidence in the organisation's ability to provide digital champion support.
4. An award formula was used to ensure a balance of awards across all of Scotland's local authority areas.
5. Successful organisations signed a grant agreement and committed to the programme's contractual obligations.
6. Post award, the [Mhor Collective](#) provided training for those nominated as digital champions in each organisation.
7. Devices were delivered to organisations who distributed them to their clients within a prescribed timeframe.
8. Post distribution, organisations submitted monitoring data on their device recipients to a central portal managed by SCVO.

How to access background or source data

The data collected for this social research publication

- are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- are available via an alternative route <specify or delete this text>
- may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors. Please contact csresearch@gov.scot for further information.
- cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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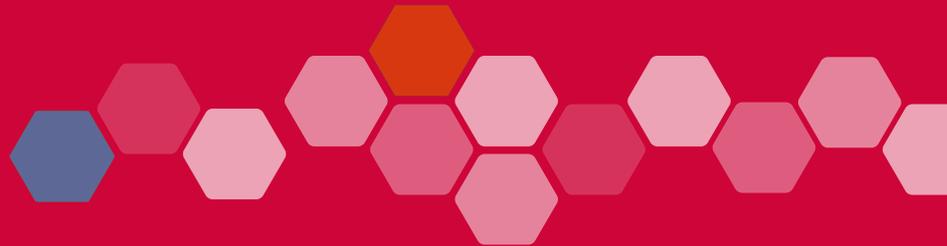
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