

# From Inclusion to Resilience: Agenda for Digital Inclusion

## Progress Report

July 2024



# Introduction

**Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales (DIAW) was created as part of the Welsh Government funded Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being programme (DCW), delivered by Cwmpas. DIAW brings together organisations from across Wales that are working together to make Wales a digitally-inclusive nation.**

With over 100 members, the Alliance comprises public and third sector organisations, private sector companies and academia, all focused on ensuring that everyone who wants to in Wales is able to access and use digital tools and technologies in their everyday lives and has the confidence to do so.

DIAW produced the first edition of its [‘Agenda for Digital Inclusion: From Inclusion to Resilience’](#) in 2021, outlining five priority areas which became the focus for DIAW Network meetings and collective action to tackle digital exclusion. In March 2023 a second edition was released, acknowledging significant changes in the digital inclusion landscape and celebrating member achievements. Now, as political change approaches in both the UK and Wales it is time for an update on those five priority areas.

Digital exclusion remains a significant and complex issue. Digital transformation of public services and more and more of our daily lives being conducted online means that those who are not able to access the digital world are excluded from society. A disproportionate amount of people who are digitally excluded are also those who are most in need of services, creating a Digital Inverse Care Law. DIAW is dedicated to its priorities and to fostering collaboration among organisations to support everyone in Wales to be digitally included.

## Priority 1

# Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors



**In December 2023 Welsh Government proposed a cut in the budget for Digital Community Wales. This highlighted the important role that DIAW plays in bringing diverse organisations together to own and embed digital inclusion and the need for a national programme to provide practical support to them.**

Although funding subsequently was restored, DCW reviewed its delivery plan for the final year of its contract and will prioritise supporting organisations to embed digital inclusion. This means that DIAW can continue to deliver its five priorities.

Embedding digital inclusion is about taking a whole organisation approach, and the journey will be different for every organisation. Members of the DIAW Network are leading the way,

sharing their experiences of doing this with each other during DIAW Network meetings. Members such as Digital Health and Care Wales, Velindre University Hospital Trust, Newydd Housing Association and Hafod have taken steps with support from DCW to gain [Digital Inclusion Charter](#) Accreditation which supports organisations to embed digital inclusion.

An essential goal is to raise awareness of the contribution digital inclusion can have to the seven National [Well-being Goals of Wales from the Well-being for Future Generations \(Wales\) Act \(2015\)](#). The recently published Well-being Plans from Public Service Boards, a key feature of the Well-being for Future Generations Act, make limited mention of digital inclusion which means that there remains significant work to be done in this area.



## Future Vision: Priority 1

- **National Support:** A national programme is funded to deliver support to organisations to embed and take ownership of digital inclusion.
- **Strategic Integration:** Welsh Government revises the Delivery Plan for the Digital Strategy for Wales which takes into account the Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS) research and incorporates DIAW priorities.
- **Public Sector Commitment:** Digital inclusion of service users and staff is a required element of all public sector digital transformation projects.
- **Raising Awareness:** Public Service Boards and public sector organisations include their work on digital inclusion in future Well-being Plans and Objectives.



## Priority 2

# Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care



**The Digital and Data Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales was published in July 2023 and shows a marked increase in awareness of digital inclusion when compared to the 2015 strategy.**

Mike Emery, Chief Digital and Innovation Officer (Health and Social Care) for NHS Wales/Welsh Government emphasised at a DIAW Network meeting the crucial role of digital inclusion in the new strategy and their commitment to collaborate with DIAW members.

DIAW health and social care members Hywel Dda University Health Board, Velindre University Hospital Trust,

Digital Health and Care Wales, Social Care Wales and Llais have all included digital inclusion in new strategies and programmes and are leading the way for other health boards and trusts across Wales.

DIAW presents alongside DCW to each of the cohorts of the USW MSc Leadership in Digital Transformation about the importance of embedding digital inclusion into organisations and into every digital transformation project and programme. It is vital that public sector leaders understand and embed digital inclusion across their organisations. This MSc is part of the Intensive Learning Academies embedded in the Digital and Data Strategy for Health and Care in Wales.



## Future Vision: Priority 2

- **Inclusivity:** Every health and care provider in Wales recognises digital inclusion as a key determinant of health and supports patients and carers to have digital access, skills and confidence.
- **Strategic Implementation:** The health and care sector delivers on the digital inclusion vision in its strategy, ensuring digital inclusion of the health and care workforce and citizens is a requirement of all digital health investment decisions.
- **Accessibility:** All digital services and products are designed using co-production approaches or user-centred design principles to meet accessibility standards and the needs of Welsh citizens and our health care professionals.



## Priority 3

# Addressing data poverty as a key issue



**The ongoing cost of living crisis in Wales is exacerbating data poverty and digital exclusion. Continued support is needed as more individuals, previously digitally included, are now falling into poverty.**

Digital exclusion deepens existing inequalities by limiting access to vital resources and opportunities. Those without digital access are left behind, widening the gap between them and those who can fully participate in the digital world.

[Recent research on a Minimum Digital Living Standard \(MDLS\)](#) for families with children shows poverty is a key driver for families being below the standard. Interviews with families

below the [MDLS in Wales](#) suggests that some are finding ways to meet their family's digital needs but at the expense of other essentials. The MDLS research also suggests that social tariffs for broadband may not meet the needs of families.

Internet access is still not considered an essential utility in Wales but work to implement the MDLS and continued funding into further research of other household types will help in understanding and addressing these issues effectively.

The National Databank and Devicebank and social tariffs are an important lifeline but there is still a need for long term, sustainable solutions with a specific focus on Wales.



## Future Vision: Priority 3

- **Essential Utility:** Internet access is recognised as an essential utility in Wales and access is provided for all citizens.
- **Coordinated Support:** There is co-ordinated, collaborative promotion of available support such as discounted social tariffs for broadband and mobile data and the National Databank. Cross-sector collaboration continues to research and design long term, sustainable solutions to data poverty with a specific focus on Wales.
- **Free and Equal Access:** There should be free and equal access to public services for all people in Wales. All public service websites and apps should be zero-rated or designed to minimise data usage as much as possible.





## Priority 4

# Prioritising essential digital skills for work and life in the economy



**In a December 2023 survey, only 13% of DIAW members agreed that the current provision of digital skills training for adults in Wales is sufficient.**

A citizen-targeted intervention in Denbighshire by DIAW member Digital Confidence Denbighshire funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund has sparked interest from other local authority areas and a similar programme is being put in place in Powys. This type of intervention, with drop-in and scheduled help available to anyone from the local area, as part of a two-pronged approach with support for organisations to embed digital inclusion in their induction and

Learning and Development offers, could be the future for digital skills training in Wales.

An [interactive map showing where to get help to get online in Wales](#) has been launched, with contributions from DIAW members. This resource requires ongoing updates and promotion to maximise its utility.

DCW continues to conduct digital skills audits with organisations across Wales and has gathered essential data to help these organisations make data-driven decisions about digital inclusion initiatives. DIAW will continue to promote audits to its members as a critical step in embedding digital inclusion.



## Future Vision: Priority 4

- **Access to Training:** Every adult in Wales has access to appropriate, ongoing basic digital skills training and confidence building.
- **Data-Driven Decisions:** A digital skills audit of employees across Wales is undertaken by employers and the data gathered is used to make data-driven decisions about digital skills interventions.
- **Coordination in Funding:** Growth and City Region Deals work to ensure that digital inclusion remains a priority within the SPF funding stream and that digital inclusion activities are coordinated to avoid duplication.



## Priority 5

# Implementing a new minimum digital living standard

**DIAW is closely linked to the research for a [Minimum Digital Living Standard \(MDLS\) for Wales](#). DIAW has supported this work as one of its five key priorities in the 'Agenda for Digital Inclusion: From Inclusion to Resilience' since its initial publication in March 2021.**

DIAW members are involved as part of the research team and in focus groups and surveys and uses its collective voice to raise awareness of this work. The MDLS research team from Loughborough and Liverpool Universities and Good Things Foundation present online at DIAW Network meetings and a recent MDLS face-to-face event in Wales held in partnership with DIAW brought together senior stakeholders from Welsh Government, public and voluntary sectors, and communication providers for cross-sector discussions on implementing MDLS for Wales.

MDLS research into households with children is now complete. The research found that over 4 in 10 families fall below the benchmark defined by the public and 27% of families don't have an adult with the critical skills to understand and



manage digital risk. This clearly shows that the issue is much more extensive than the often-used statistic of 7% of people in Wales being digitally excluded.

DIAW supports further funding for MDLS research to other household types - reflecting and building on new research such as the [Older People's Commissioner for Wales' report 'Access Denied'](#). This report highlights the need for digital inclusion initiatives to be targeted at older people to ensure they do not get left behind during digital transformation. It is vital that older people are not excluded to ensure they live well longer. Further research into other household types is imperative to truly understand the issue and design programmes and allocate funding to effectively target those in need.

Welsh Government also presented at a recent online DIAW Network meeting to share information about its investment into a pioneering MDLS pilot in Wales with social housing. It is a small-scale pilot aimed at social housing residents, not just households with children, and grants have been awarded to two housing associations for a nine month pilot to begin in July 2024. This initial MDLS pilot will provide valuable insights for broader application in the future.



## Future Vision: Priority 5

- **Comprehensive Research:** The creation of a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales for households with children is the catalyst for Welsh Government to commission further research to understand the implications of the Minimum Digital Living Standard on a range of households and communities facing digital exclusion in Wales.
- **Strategic Commitment:** Effective cross-sector strategies, policies and actions are developed together with financial and political commitment to implement a Minimum Digital Living Standard to ensure that no households in Wales are below the MDLS threshold as part of the vision for digital inclusion in Wales.





Thank you for reading

Contact us:  
[diaw@cwmpas.coop](mailto:diaw@cwmpas.coop)  
[@DIAWales](https://twitter.com/DIAWales)