

**Report of the Director of City Development and the Chief Information Officer**

**Report to Scrutiny Board (City Development)**

**Date: 14<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

**Subject: Scrutiny Inquiry into Digital Inclusion**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. To provide Scrutiny Board (City Development) with the information required to undertake the first session of the inquiry into digital inclusion.
2. The report outlines the gap between those who are digitally engaged and those who are not, the reasons why this may be the case, and the impact this has and then discusses opportunities to improve engagement.

**Recommendations**

3. Scrutiny Board is requested to note the contents of this report.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 To provide Scrutiny Board (City Development) with the information required to undertake the first session of the inquiry into digital inclusion.
- 1.2 The report outlines the gap between those who are digitally engaged and those who are not, the reasons why this may be the case, and the impact this has and then discusses opportunities to improve engagement.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.3 The Scrutiny Board agreed the terms of reference of the 9th of September with the first session on the 14th of October. This first session is very much about the objectives to be achieved and our aspirations as a local authority.
- 2.4 In consideration of this Scrutiny Inquiry it has been recognised that there are two main elements to digital inclusion, firstly the people who use digital services – having the skills, motivation and confidence to engage digitally, and secondly the infrastructure – is there an appropriate network/broadband service for them to connect to. As such this report can be considered in two parts – people and infrastructure.
- 2.5 The key areas of focus for the session are as follows:
- 2.6 **Session 1 - General Introduction and the Leeds Landscape**
  - The Digital Divide, the variables that causes of this and the impact.
  - How to close the gap. What should we aspire to achieve as a City?
  - The Governments Digital Inclusion Strategy and support from DCMS
  - Connectivity and infrastructure across Leeds currently and future plan. Which areas are excluded or disadvantaged.
  - Leeds City Council Corporate responsibility and the need to develop a Digital Inclusion Strategy.
- 2.7 Future sessions will expand on these and provide commentary on the following:

### **Session 2 and 3 – The Current Landscape - Supporting individuals and communities**

- The Leeds landscape. Digital engagement of people and small enterprise by income, education, age and geographic location. What do we know?
- Understanding what support is being provided in Leeds by all sectors including the Council and an overview of known programmes and initiatives.
- Initiatives to support small enterprise including Super Connected Cities and Smart Cities.
- Identifying gaps and targeting services and resource

- Co-ordination of activity to reduce fragmentation in spending and practice
- Provision of affordable access and equipment.
- Internet access provision in public spaces and Council buildings
- Providing digital literacy skills, outreach and support
  - Signposting and promotion of what is available
  - Promoting access at an early age – what is done in schools and with parents.
  - For education, employment and welfare
  - For access to e-commerce, on-line discounts and e-government
- Targeting hard to reach groups, individuals who struggle to embrace technology and those with physical or cognitive impairments
- Ongoing support to promote confidence and trust in digital technology.

#### **Session 4 – The Strategy for improvement – Supporting individuals and communities.**

- Reflecting on where we are and the strategic approach to improve
- Opportunities to develop new networks and potential to use Council assets to enhance infrastructure
- Partnership, funding and governance arrangements the for delivery of schemes/support/programmes
- Monitoring outcomes and building on what works

### **3 Main issues**

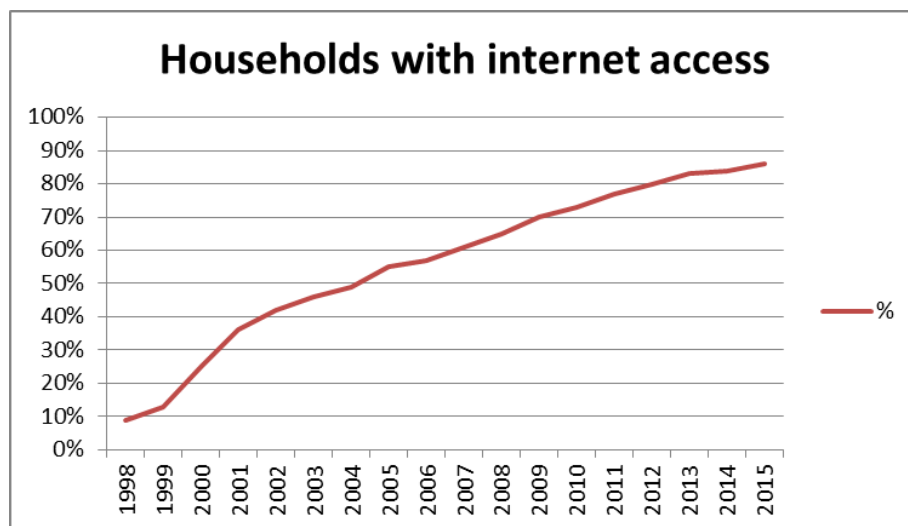
#### **3.1 General Introduction and Leeds Landscape**

- 3.1.1 To understand the level and impact of the digital divide, and in order to appreciate whether the presence of a divide is a cause for concern, it is important to first understand the role, value and breadth of digital services and the growth which these have undergone in recent years.
- 3.1.2 Empowering citizens to achieve their goals at their own pace through access to knowledge and support has been the role of public libraries in Leeds since they first opened in 1870. Since then Leeds' libraries survived without any form of digitisation until 1994 when the library catalogue was computerised and library staff were seconded to create the Council's first internet site. The People's Network, providing free internet access was introduced in 2000, and expanded this role, enabling access to the world's digital knowledge; in 2002 the computers were used 105,824 times, and 822 learning sessions were delivered to 3,651 learners.

- 3.1.3 Within the library service alone the digital presence has grown. In 2014 free public internet use had grown to 878,736 uses of the computers, by 50,006 users, including 2,319 learning sessions delivered to 3,924 learners.
- 3.1.4 The service now also offers free wifi at 35 locations, provides a self-issue service to avoid queues, enables online loan renewals, has trialled operating a library opened by technology rather than staff, has introduced an e-book service which saw 41,365 loans last year up 55% on the previous year (the equivalent number of loans to a medium sized library), and has a library app which allows customers to search and reserves books from the collection from anywhere.
- 3.1.5 Further, growth and reliance on digital service provision is illustrated by the growth in the Council's web presence. The site was created and launched in 1994/5, at that time the website had very few pages and this was purely informational.
- 3.1.6 The website currently has just under 1,400 pages, covering a wide variety of services from council tax, planning and waste to local democracy, communities, leisure, libraries, museums and galleries.
- 3.1.7 On average in 2015 (Jan-Aug), the site has attracted just under 2 million page visits (approximately a 50% increase on figures recorded in 2009) and over 400,000 users each month.
- 3.1.8 Many of our users come to the site to carry out transactions, a summary of which is below:
- in the first quarter of 2015/16, over £16.5 million was collected via on-line payments and there were approximately 13,000 e-form transactions completed, these covered areas such as council tax, reporting missed bins, applying for a Leeds card and the new services provided via the MyLeeds customer portal;
  - there have been over 200,000 bids for council homes via the Leeds Home website (Jan – Aug);
  - just under 15,000 of our most recent primary and secondary school admission applications were on-line;
  - the current site allocations consultation will enable users to participate on-line via interactive maps;
  - on-line services are available for customers to register to vote (prior to the 2015 general election 11,000 on-line registrations were received in 1 day), apply for jobs and apprenticeships, report council housing repairs and apply for blue badge parking permits;
  - currently on-line bookings represent between 28 – 34% of sports and leisure's total weekly bookings - there are currently have 6763 members registered to use the on-line booking facility; and
  - the Carriageworks theatre and Leeds Town Hall concert venue generate approximately £720k of income per year in on-line bookings.

3.1.9 Nationally, internet access has risen from just 9% in 1998 to 86% in 2015, as illustrated in the table below.

3.1.10 However, despite this huge growth there remains a sizeable cohort who have not been able to experience the benefits that digital literacy and connectivity can offer. With 320k households in Leeds this equates to approximately 45k households without access.



Source: ONS Notes: UK estimates from 1998 to 2004. GB estimates from 2005 to 2015.

3.1.11 The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) recognises this divide; “In the UK approximately 12% of the adult population have never been online and this increases to 61% for those over 75 years of age. With so many opportunities from education, interacting with friends, job opportunities and access to government and health services all available online, it has never been more important for libraries to be at the forefront of supporting residents and communities’ digital skills.”<sup>1</sup> For Leeds this equates to over 91k adult residents never having used the internet, over 33k of whom are over 75.

3.1.12 As such, SCL includes ‘Digital’ as one of the four Universal Offers it encourages all public libraries to provide, alongside Reading, Information and Health. The Digital offer indicates that every public library service should provide:

- Free internet access
- Clear and accessible online information about library services
- Staff trained to help customers access digital information

3.1.13 The map shown in Appendix 1 illustrates the level internet use by region; Leeds’ population falls within the 85-89.9% band alongside the majority of the nation, where the UK has a national average of 86.2% takeup.

3.1.14 Applying the national statistics to Leeds’ demographic means that approximately:

- The internet is accessed almost daily by 482k of Leeds adult residents (78%)

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Stopforth, Society of Chief Librarians Digital Lead

- Almost all adults aged 16-24 (111k, 96%) access the internet “on the go” compared to 33.5k (29%) aged 65 and over.
- 377k of adults (61%) use social networking in the previous 3 months, 298k (79%) of those almost daily.
- 12.4k (2%) are lapsed users – used the internet more than 3 months ago.

## 3.2 The Digital Divide, the variables that cause this and the impact

### 3.2.1 The Divide:

3.2.2 The diagram shown at Appendix 2 ‘2014 Digital Nation?’ illustrates the differences between those who are digitally enabled and those who remain ‘offline’. Some of the most striking observations are:

Of those not online :

- 49% are disabled
- 60% have no qualifications
- 61% are over 65
- 42% earn less than £12.5k per year

Who is online:

- 90% of ABC1s
- 95% of graduates
- 99% of 16-24
- 99% of £40k+ earners

3.2.3 Further work is ongoing to identify a more focussed Leeds perspective on the digital divide which will be reported at a future session for this enquiry.

### 3.2.4 The Variables that causes the digital divide:

Table 27: Reasons for households not having internet access, 2006 to 2015

	2006	2008	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Don't need internet (not useful, not interesting, etc)	34	33	39	50	54	59	53	53
Lack of skills	:	14	21	21	22	20	32	31
Equipment costs too high	21	15	18	19	15	13	12	14
Access costs too high (telephone, broadband subscription)	16	11	15	13	14	12	11	12
Have access to the internet elsewhere	10	9	8	8	8	7	8	7
Privacy or security concerns	8	3	4	5	4	2	6	5
Physical or sensorial disability	3	1	2	3	3	2	3	5
Other reason	13	18	13	18	15	13	12	14

Base: Households in Great Britain without internet access.

Source: Office for National Statistics

These questions were not asked in 2007 or 2009.

: Data not available.

3.2.5 Unsurprisingly, as the number of households without internet decreases, and the cost of achieving connectivity also decreases, the proportion of those saying they don't have internet access due to either not being interested or due to a lack of skills remains high or increases.

Also increasing is the proportion of non-users who class themselves as having a physical or sensory disability.

### 3.2.6 The Impact:

3.2.7 According to the Tinder Foundation the broad benefits of digital inclusion, and conversely the negative impact of exclusion, are:

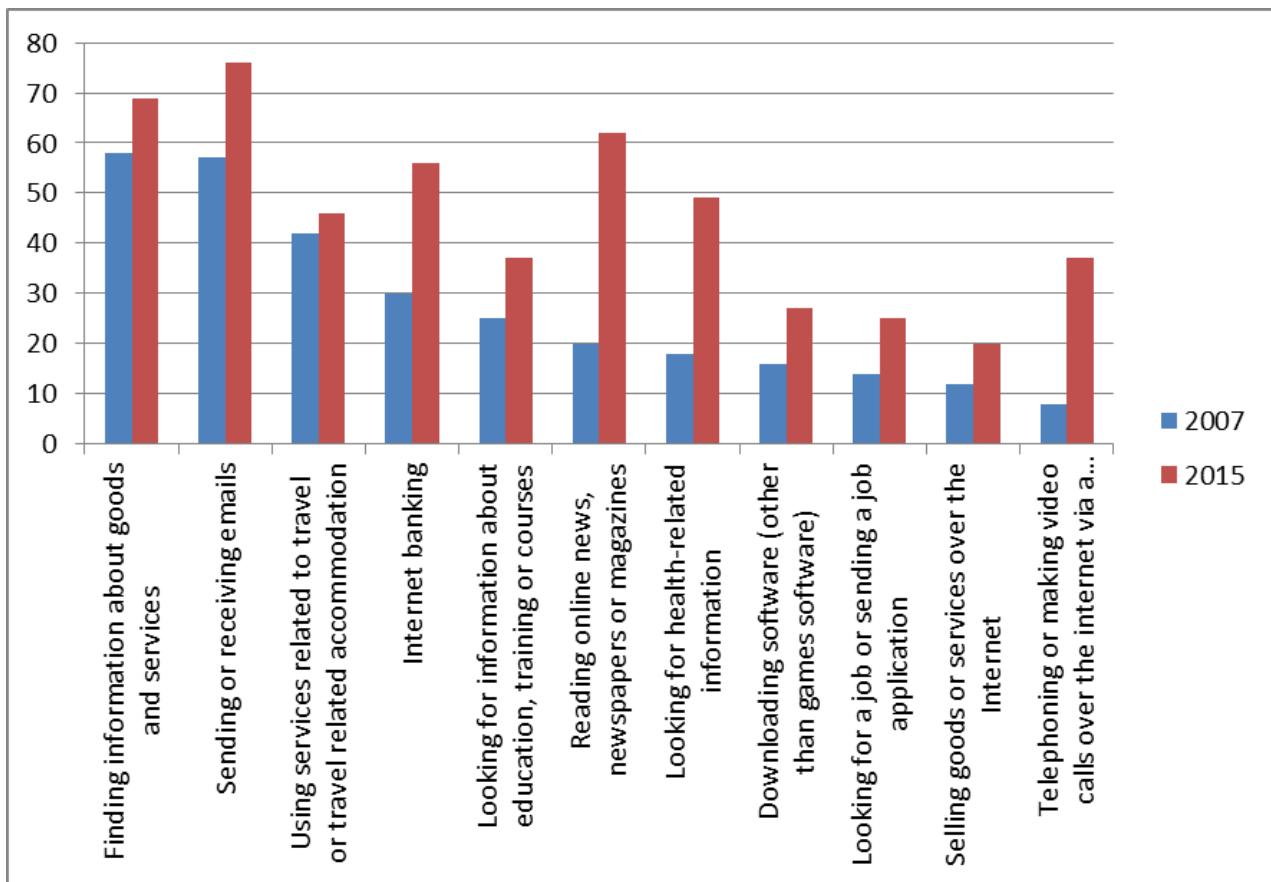
1. On the individual level, digital inclusion means:
  - **Time and monetary savings stemming from the use of web-based technologies** – through increased consumer choice and better access to information.
  - **Improved educational attainment** – through more effective learning, and stimulated motivation.
  - **Improved salary prospects** – through e-learning and computer literacy.
  - **Increased satisfaction with public services** – through increased flexibility, convenience of access and overall higher standards of service.
  
2. For the Government, digital inclusion means:
  - **Cost savings and increased efficiency and productivity** – stemming from increasing use of online public services.
  
3. The private sector can benefit from digital inclusion in terms of:
  - **Increased efficiency and productivity** – in terms of employees using internet based applications to process work more efficiently.
  - **Increased sales opportunities** – stemming from the application of technologies to reach customers.
  - **Increased demand for ICT products and services** – more access and use of the internet will lead to greater demand.
  
4. The wider society benefits from:
  - **Decreased social exclusion** – through involving members of marginalised groups in mainstream society activities.
  - **Increased civic participation** – through providing wider opportunities for self expression for citizens.
  - **Enhanced working and natural environment** – through fostering a more stimulating working environment as well as flexible and remote working practices.
  
5. The wider economy can benefit in terms of:
  - **Increased demand for the ICT industry** – driving yet further innovation and efficiency gains.
  - **Increased UK competitiveness** – attracting inward investment.
  - **Increased GDP growth rate** – enabling further investment in research and development, which will feed back into a virtuous circle of GDP growth and technological development.

*Source: The 'Economic benefits of digital inclusion: building the evidence' report*

- 3.2.8 A brief list of some of uses people make of the internet are illustrated in the table below and show both the growth and change in emphasis since 2007 when comparable records began.
  
- 3.2.9 It must also be remembered that what appeals to different people and the uses they choose to make of digital services varies, so the 'offer' cannot be 'one size fits all', as illustrated by the second diagram below showing how use varies by age.

Within the last 3 months

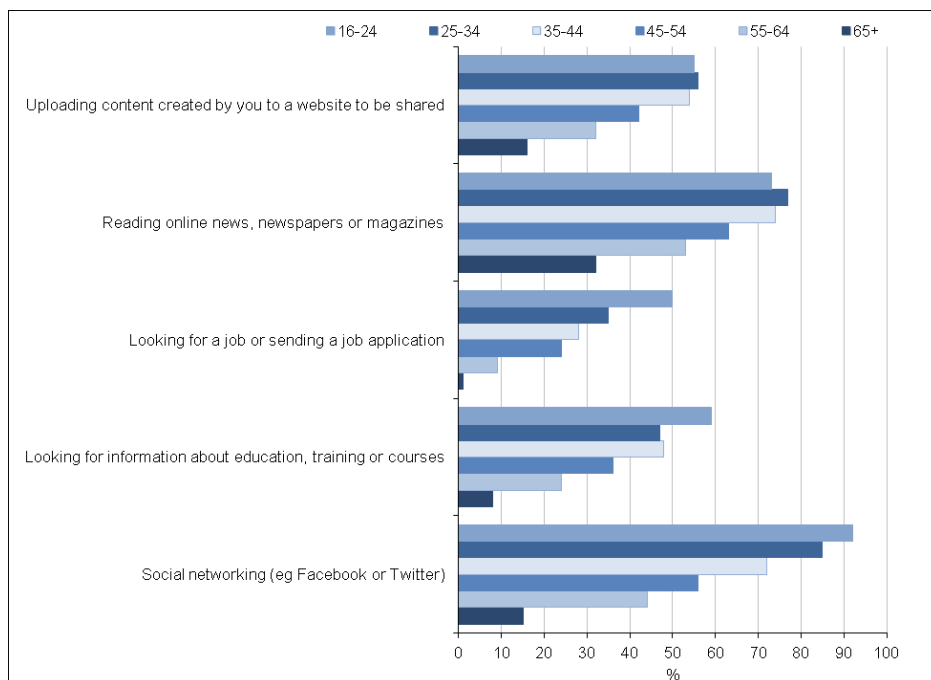
%



Base: Adults (aged 16+) in Great Britain.

Source : Office for National Statistics

### Internet activities by age group, 2015, Great Britain



Source: Office for National Statistics



- 3.2.10 In a world where more and more services are provided through an online mechanisms, and 'digital by default' is the norm, digital inclusion becomes synonymous with inclusion.
- 3.2.11 Failure to provide the skills necessary for someone to enjoy the benefits that online connections can provide will perpetuate and increase the levels of exclusion and disadvantage, both social and economic, experienced by those already left behind as more and more organisations use online as their preferred method of providing a service.
- 3.2.12 A number of organisations/activities are already moving in this direction; extra discounts are often given by utilities companies who manage their accounts solely online, people can only utilise price comparison websites, auction sites, social media, etc. if they have confidence engaging digitally and their own digital presence via e-mail, etc.
- 3.2.13 Some other areas of support for citizens are already only delivered digitally by the local authority, e.g. Driving Test Theory, Citizenship test preparation, Autism support through Boardmaker, and bidding for council homes; and nationally the 'Digital by Default' progress of national Government is moving more services being delivered this way, e.g. car tax renewals and progress towards Universal Credit and Universal jobmatch.

### **3.3 How to close the gap. What should we aspire to achieve as a City?**

#### **3.3.1 Libraries and Community Hubs**

- 3.3.2 SCL provide an e-learning platform, the current training package, Digital Information Skills for Library Workforce, has been designed so that people who work with customers on a daily basis are able to fluently navigate and use national and local government information sites, demonstrate where these sites would be relevant for someone out of work, needing to claim benefits, wanting to open a business or start a career, or concerned about their health.
- 3.3.3 SCL are also working on a new Universal Credit e-learning module. Content is currently being worked on and SCL has begun talks with DWP to ensure the module reflects latest policy on Universal Credit. The module is expected to be ready to roll out early in 2016.
- 3.3.4 SCL will launch a new 'Learning' universal offer on 5th November which is expected to encompass online learning opportunities and skills for digital making, such as code writing.
- 3.3.5 The training provided by libraries and in community hubs provides the basic skills and is available free of charge to anyone who lives, works or studies in Leeds. However, if the entire cohort of existing non users all came to a library to receive their basic skills training at the present rate of delivery it would take almost 15 years to complete.
- 3.3.6 Thankfully there are other providers, and also other ways to engage and develop skills, and the Smart Cities Steering Group is investigating how information about these opportunities can be better co-ordinated.

### **3.3.7 UK Online Centres**

3.3.8 The UK online centres network is made up of 5,000 centres nationally, helping people make the most of technology and widening digital inclusion among the most socially excluded in the UK. Since 2005, the UK online centres network has been managed by Tinder Foundation - a small not-for-profit social enterprise based in Sheffield. In Leeds there are 57 UK Online centres, including the 35 libraries mentioned above. Non-library UK online centres are:

- HITBase St Lukes
- Swarthmore Centre
- Business Support and Development
- BFAWULS
- FixIT Leeds
- Solange Robinson Consultancy Ltd (SRC Training)
- One Community Centre
- NRC Leeds (RETAS)
- Billing View Community Group
- LCC ICT Centre
- BHA Leeds Skyline
- Joy & joy
- RCM
- Leeds Federated Housing Association
- ECX Training Limited
- Leeds Together Women Project
- Norton Webb Ltd
- Remploy Leeds
- Pudsey Wellbeing Centre
- Chapeltown & Harehills Area Learning Project
- Leeds Mind
- Nari Ekta Ltd

### **3.3.9 Community Learning fund providers**

3.3.10 Leeds City Council's Employment & Skills service applies for and administers the city's Community Learning fund from the Skills Funding Agency. In 2014 the Council appointed 30 local providers to a three year framework to deliver a broad and balanced range of community learning for adults. As part of this contract the Library service delivers IT training sessions to adults across the city, with specific focus on unemployed people and people who live in the 20% most deprived Super Output Areas. The other providers who are currently contracted to deliver Information and Communication Technology learning opportunities are:

- Cardigan Centre
- Health For All
- Leeds City College
- Refugee Education Advice Service
- St Lukes Cares
- Swarthmore
- Vera Media
- City Of Leeds YMCA

### **3.3.11 Leeds Community Learning Trust Board**

3.3.12 Leeds Community Learning Trust Board is a partnership body, set up in 2012 to influence strategic priorities through the delivery of quality Community Learning for the city. It includes some of the city's key stakeholders from the third sector, Further and Higher Education, Health, Children's and Adult Services.

### **3.3.13 Smart Cities**

3.3.14 Leeds has established a Smart Cities Steering Group chaired by the Deputy Chief Executive, Strategy and Resources and involving officers from across the Council, representing Economic Development, Adult Social Care, Public Health, ICT, Policy and Intelligence, as well as the Library and Information Service. Within this framework Library and Information Services are leading on the 'people' element with a project brief focussing on Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff.

3.3.15 The proposed scope of this project is to:

- Determine the digital skills which are required for citizens, communities, and business staff in the Smart City context.
- Determine the training courses, tools, strategies and other resources available in Leeds and nationally that would be of benefit to address this skills gap.
- Identify the gaps between the baseline position and the skills required.
- Determine the approach and framework for closing the gap.
- Develop an engagement strategy to give awareness of these resources to the groups above.
- Determine take up via training sessions offered and amount of signposting.
- Co-ordination and communication of digital skills training and learning opportunities across the region.

3.3.16 In connection with this project Leeds Library and Information Service has bid into the Library Digital Inclusion Fund, administered by the Tinder Foundation, and received an award of £10k to conduct an action research project to deliver a digital inclusion initiative called 'Connect-Ability', which will engage housebound and disabled people in Leeds with digital technology.

3.3.17 People with disabilities face multiple barriers to digital engagement and the library service will use the funding to buy tablets with 3G/4G connectivity and use these to provide training and support to people with disabilities, their carers volunteers and staff from other organisations that work with people with disabilities.

3.3.18 The Library At Home service users have an interest in books and that interest will be used as the initial hook to engage with digital technology – search the catalogue, reserve a book, download and e-book, etc. which through general digital functional familiarity, e.g. web use, online form filing, etc. will build confidence for other digital use and where appropriate will develop into broader online training using the Basic Online Skills courses available on Learn My Way, a free to use, Government backed, IT learning platform managed by the Tinder Foundation.

3.3.19 A further scheme is in progress to develop digital skills within health and social care. 'Digital Maturity in the Leeds health and care workforce' will seek to develop

the basic skills of this workforce and enable these staff to act as advocates for digital engagement in service delivery.

- 3.3.20 The Council also needs to be at the forefront of developing wider learning opportunities which enable citizens to embrace new technologies, both anticipating and preparing for the future; these include supporting customers as trends for digital connectivity move away from desktop computers to personal devices and tablets, and the provision of Code Clubs, and access to FAB labs, etc.
- 3.3.21 Work is already ongoing with the establishment of networks of digital champions and improvements to digital communications and transactions, as well as directing customers to digital channels, or signposting them to receive appropriate support to help get customers online. The work of the Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff project will be to identify improvements to how this work can be co-ordinated and a comprehensive offer to citizen's be provided.

### **3.4 The Government's Digital Inclusion Strategy and support from DCMS**

- 3.4.1 The Government's Digital Strategy sets out a process that will transform how the Government provides services. By digital by default, the intention is that digital services are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded.
- 3.4.2 Once areas of support is via the Digital Inclusion Outcomes Framework, a flexible template for tracking digital inclusion in the UK, and evaluating activities locally.
- 3.4.3 Anyone who chooses to use the Framework will be able to demonstrate how their digital inclusion activities contribute to local priorities and needs. This should help make the case for investment and partnerships, and drive improvement by identifying what works in delivering better outcomes.
- 3.4.4 The Government Digital Service with the support of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills is seeking suppliers who can provide digital training and digital support services to reduce the number of digitally excluded people in the UK, by removing the barriers presented by lack of access, digital skills, vulnerability or motivation. SCL is looking at opportunities to bid in partnership with the Tinder Foundation and Citizens Advice Bureau. It is anticipated that invitations to tender will be published in Oct/Nov and the evaluation take place in January 2016.

### **3.5 Connectivity and infrastructure across Leeds currently and future plan. Which areas are excluded or disadvantaged.**

- 3.5.1 When considering digital inclusion in its widest context some consideration should be given to the infrastructure position. Where connectivity options are limited and/or deemed to be (prohibitively) expensive there can be a negative impact in digital inclusion terms. Access to good quality connectivity is recognised as an important driver of social inclusion and a key determinant of economic development.
- 3.5.2 **Government broadband investment policy**
- 3.5.3 The aim of current Government policy is to:

3.5.4 “achieve a transformation in our broadband access, with everyone in the UK able to access broadband speeds of at least 2 megabits per second (Mbps) and 95% of the UK receiving far greater speeds (at least 24Mbps) by 2017. We are also exploring options to extend the benefits of fast broadband to remaining areas.

3.5.5 To make sure everyone in the UK has access to fast, reliable broadband we are:

- investing £530 million to stimulate commercial investment and bring high speed broadband to rural communities reaching 90% of UK homes and businesses
- investing a further £250 million to extend the benefits of superfast broadband to 95% of the UK and exploring approaches to deliver superfast broadband to the remaining hardest to reach areas, initially through a new £10 million competitive fund
- investing £150 million in ‘super-connected cities’ across the UK
- removing red tape to make it easier to put in broadband infrastructure

3.5.6 We are also investing up to £150 million to improve the quality and coverage of mobile phone voice and data services (we call this the Mobile Infrastructure Project).

3.5.7 These changes will reinforce the UK’s position as a leading digital economy and will help to create local jobs and national growth. The government’s own programmes will help to bring broadband to parts of the country that would not otherwise be reached by the private sector”.

(Policy Paper “2010-2015 Government Policy: Broadband Investment”, May 2015 [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

3.5.8 Government has created a delivery arm for this activity Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) which sits within the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

### **3.5.9 Broadband investment in Leeds**

3.5.10 Leeds has been involved in the delivery of two Government broadband schemes. The Superfast West Yorkshire Project and the SuperConnected Cities programme.

### **3.5.11 Superfast West Yorkshire**

3.5.12 The Superfast West Yorkshire (SFWY) programmes utilise BDUK funding to deliver superfast broadband access to premises (commercial and residential) which have not had access provided through commercial activity (the majority of which has been undertaken by BT or Virgin). The funding is used to pay for cabinets to be fibre-enabled. A fibre is run between the exchange and the telephone cabinet with the final part of the connection between the cabinet and the premise using the existing copper telephone line. Fibre enabled cabinets can deliver superfast broadband (SFBB) products to end users. In this context superfast is speeds above 24mbps.

3.5.13 Phase One of this project involved Leeds, Bradford, Wakefield and Calderdale districts and utilised BDUK funding to upgrade cabinets serving 64,500 premises

(residential and commercial) across the four districts. The phase 1 programme was completed in September 2015.

- 3.5.14 The second phase of the project will involve all five West Yorkshire authorities as well as York. The headline output is that by the end of 2018 over 98% of premises across the intervention area will have access to SFBB. This headline figure includes the activity delivered under commercial programmes.
- 3.5.15 As well as the infrastructure programme the Superfast West Yorkshire phase 1 project delivered demand stimulation and business support activity.
- 3.5.16 ***The demand stimulation*** programme has involved events, newsletters and social media campaigns to drive interest amongst residents and encourage take up of superfast broadband. Across West Yorkshire take up has been high (typically around 25-30% take up on cabinets upgraded for 12 months or more) and in excess of both other BDUK areas and take up associated with BTs commercial roll out.
- 3.5.17 ***The business support programme*** engaged with 418 businesses across West Yorkshire (target of 400). The aim of the activity was to improve the digital skills of business owners/employees and to encourage them to develop the digital presence of their business. The level of interest in the programme was high (over 800 registrations of interest to participate in activity) and the intention is to develop a further programme of digital business support activity for the phase II programme.
- 3.5.18 What's the impact of the Superfast West Yorkshire project in Leeds?**
- 3.5.19 The project has improved the infrastructure position across the district and has extended access to superfast broadband products. Through the programme 143 of cabinets in Leeds have been fibre enabled (note – cabinets near the edge of the district will likely serve premises in neighbouring districts and vice versa). During Phase II of the programme a further 22 cabinets will be enabled.
- 3.5.20 The take up rates on the cabinets already enabled by the programme is good. As a general trend the longer the cabinet is enabled the more take up is associated with it. However, in some instances there can be a significant build-up of demand for better provision prior to the cabinet being upgraded and take-up is very good from the outset as the cabinet satisfies that latent demand.
- 3.5.21 Where take up is low there may be a number of explanations.
- Awareness is factor - both awareness of the availability of SFBB services and also awareness of the benefits that might be associated with better connectivity.
  - There may also be an issue around affordability. To access SFBB residents will need to have a phone line installed (with exception of Virgin who do offer some broadband only deals). Those with poor credit histories can find it difficult to get a broadband contract. Some providers do offer packages specifically for those with poor credit histories but access to SFBB may be limited.

- Where there is a significant “uplift” available between the non-fibre speed the premise receives and that that could be achieved by fibre, then the take-up is usually very good. For example If you are currently receiving 2 Mbps download and you could get 50 Mbps with fibre (i.e. an uplift of 48Mbps), then it is highly likely you will sign up for a new fibre contract. If the uplift is, say, 5Mbps, then the resident may choose to stay as they are.
- Finally people may be using different technologies to go online e.g. 4G mobile provision and are not interested in accessing SFBB products.

3.5.22 Despite the overall success of the programme in delivering improved infrastructure there are flaws within the scheme design as a whole which have a bearing on the impacts associated with the scheme at both a national and local level;

- Premises within around 1km or so of a fibre enabled cabinet should be able to receive superfast speeds (in excess of 24Mbps). For premises further away from the cabinet the copper wire is not able to sustain superfast speeds and, in the short term at least, these premises will be unable to receive SFBB products. BT are working on technical solutions which may offer greater speeds to premises in this situation.
- A further complexity is that the headline coverage figures e.g. 98% of premises with access to SFBB also includes premises where Virgin Media services are available. In postcode areas where Virgin Media services are available, even if they’re not available to every premise within that postcode, publicly funded activity cannot take place. In these areas (so called Superfast grey areas) if residents want to take up SFBB they will only be able to do this through Virgin. Other providers, including Sky, will use the BT infrastructure to deliver the broadband service to the home and if the BT cabinet has not been enabled alternative SFBB will not be available.
- Also included in the headline figure of 98% of premises with access to SFBB is reference to commercial activity undertaken outside the BDUK funded programmes. The nationwide position is that it is unclear exactly how much of the commercial programme was completed before work started on the BDUK funded activity. There is no obligation on the part of BT or others to complete this commercial work. By the end of March 2016, BT will complete the build and commissioning of all those West Yorkshire (and therefore Leeds’) cabinets that are currently in progress. For some parts of Leeds residents and businesses may be in limbo with no certainty about when BT may do infrastructure upgrades.
- For those areas where SFBB is not available and where the existing infrastructure is not able to deliver speeds to end users in excess of 2Mbps BDUK is proposing utilising satellite broadband to deliver connectivity. There are concerns about the suitability of satellite broadband given that it is generally seen as a high cost option that can be unreliable and potentially unsuitable for some activities such as streaming/gaming etc.

3.5.23 Notwithstanding the issues listed above the SFWY project has already delivered improvements to the overall infrastructure position in Leeds and the phase II project will extend this coverage to even more premises. There is now greater scope for residential and commercial users to access SFBB products and to take advantage of the benefits associated with better connectivity.

### 3.5.24 SuperConnected Cities programme

3.5.25 The SuperConnected Cities programme was a partnership between Leeds and Bradford councils which delivered activity across both districts. The main focus of the programme was a business support measure – connection vouchers which provide grant support to SME business owners to upgrade their business connection. There were four strands of programme activity:

Programme strand	Output
SME connection vouchers	2,509 vouchers offered to 31/03/15 (c.£2m of grant funding to SMEs)
Wifi in public buildings	157 public buildings completed
Wifi on public transport	17 buses operating number 72 bus route
	7 buses operating Bradford centre to LBIA
	24 trains operating Airedale & Wharfedale routes
General purpose ducting	Ducting installed at business park development in Baildon, Bradford

### 3.5.26 Digital inclusion impacts

3.5.27 SuperConnected Cities funding was used to install free public wifi into 106 public buildings in Leeds. The buildings included in the programme include local libraries, leisure centres, community centres, one-stops and children’s centres, museums and visitor attractions.

3.5.28 The provision allows members of the public to use their own device to access free wifi. A simple registration process is required and there are no restrictions on the number of times or length of time people can stay on-line.

3.5.29 Analytics from earlier in the year (Feb-May 2015) showed that around 1800-1900 users per day were taking advantage of the free wifi provision. 94% of users were using either a mobile or tablet. The majority of users navigate away from LCC free wifi homepage to external sites (to be expected) but those that stay access LCC content on leeds.gov.uk – most commonly libraries and leisure centres info.

3.5.30 Wider provision of free public wifi is intended to go beyond connectivity, by using public buildings (particularly libraries) as hubs supporting communities and individuals to get online, set up emails, learn how to use computers and to assist them in their everyday life. With the changes to the Welfare system and introduction of universal credit the need to be IT literate is even more important and using libraries as community hubs can assist in helping individuals to become digitally enabled in a safe environment within their own local community.

3.5.31 Installing free public wifi in community buildings allows the opportunity for a wider range of buildings in community settings to be used for learning and a greater range of venues where digital inclusion activity can be delivered.



### **3.5.32 Other infrastructure activity**

**3.5.33 Free city wifi** – the council has awarded a concession contract to a local internet company aql which allows them to access LCC assets such as lamp posts, street furniture etc in order to allow them to develop free public wifi networks. The concession agreement with aql will widen access to free public wifi across more areas of the city, allowing more people the potential to access free connectivity using their own devices.

**3.5.34 Wifi in LCC towerblocks** – the council is working with a number of wireless broadband providers (who are primarily engaged in the business broadband market) to develop a pilot project which will allow providers to use roof space on LCC owned residential towerblocks to build wireless broadband networks. As part of the permission to occupy the roof spaces providers will be asked to provide a free residential wifi service to residents living within the towerblocks. This pilot project will allow LCC to establish some baseline information about the type of connectivity residents in the blocks concerned are already using as well as take-up and usage of the free wifi once available.

## **4 Leeds City Council Corporate responsibility and the need to develop a Digital Inclusion Strategy.**

4.1 There is an identifiable gap between people who are engaged digitally and those who are not, and as the number of organisations/activities which become digital increases the impact, both social and economic, experienced by those already left behind will increase.

4.2 The local authority recognises its role in ensuring that its citizens have access to the skills required to become digitally engaged and through its network of UK Online Centres and via funding from the Community Learning Fund delivers free training to anyone who lives, works or studies in Leeds. Additional training and support is available outside of these networks and the Smart Cities Steering Group has a role to play in seeing these opportunities better understood and utilised.

4.3 Individual service strategies or policies exist within the Council, for example Customer Access's internal communications strategy to develop front line staff knowledge and confidence in using/signposting customers to online channel. A Digital Inclusion Strategy would be beneficial focusing on the skills, confidence and motivation of citizens to engage digitally.

## **5 Corporate Considerations**

### **5.1 Consultation and Engagement**

5.1.1 Consultation has been undertaken between officers across City Development, including Libraries and Economic Development, Citizens and Communities, and Strategy and Resources. Further research has been carried out including a review of Office of National Statistics and Tinder Foundation data relating to digital take up. Further consultation will involve other stakeholders and partners as the Smart Cities' project Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff develops.

### **5.2 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

5.2.1 An equality and impact assessment has not been completed at this stage, however, national evidence suggests that older people, those on low incomes, those with low educational attainment and people with disabilities are most likely to be excluded from digital activity

5.2.2 An equality and impact assessment will be completed as part of the Smart Cities project Digital Literacy for Citizens and Business Staff to ensure that these national and any locally determined issues and appropriate actions are identified.

### **5.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

5.3.1 Support for digital inclusion across the city contributes to the Strategic Objectives of :

- supporting communities and tackling poverty
- promoting sustainable and inclusive economic growth
- delivering the better lives programme
- becoming a more efficient and enterprising council

5.3.2 and link strongly to the Best City Outcomes of:

- Live with dignity and stay independent for as long as possible
- Do well at all levels of learning and have the skills they need for life
- Earn enough to support themselves and their families
- Enjoy greater access to green space, leisure and the arts

### **5.4 Resources and value for money**

5.4.1 Improvements to digital infrastructure, communications systems and transactions, as well as ensuring that the city's citizens have the skills to utilise them, will help ensure greater efficiencies.

### **5.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

5.5.2 None.

### **5.6 Risk Management**

5.6.1 None.

## **6 Conclusions**

6.1 There is an identifiable gap between people who are engaged digitally and those who are not, and as the number of organisations/activities which become digital increases the impact, both social and economic, experienced by those already left behind will increase.

6.2 The local authority recognises its role in ensuring that its citizens have access to the skills required to become digitally engaged and delivers training through its network of libraries and community hubs. Additional training and support is available outside this network and the Smart Cities Steering Group has a role to play in seeing these opportunities co-ordinated.

## **7 Recommendations**

7.1 Scrutiny Board is requested to note the contents of this report.

**8 Background documents<sup>2</sup>**

None

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<sup>2</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.