Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
20 September 2021

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Background

There are a broad range of initiatives taking place across Tower Hamlets which aim to improve digital inclusion. Many of these began as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a need to understand and better coordinate these activities to strengthen this work, avoid duplication and identify specific gaps in provision

Vision - Residents of Tower Hamlets have the tools and skills they need to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from a digital world

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How we've developed this work

- Steering Group – Health, Housing, VCS, Business, Education and Council

- Intervention mapping exercise

- Toynbee Hall Community Researchers

- Reviewed ARS, local, regional and national research

- Case studies

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Key themes

- Four barriers to digital inclusion
  - Access (devices and connectivity)
  - Skills
  - Motivation
  - Trust
- Cost
- Those with disabilities, older people, CYP, language
- Importance of family and friends
- Individual needs differ – no one size fits all
- Everchanging context with technology and need evolving

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Emerging Actions – Access to devices and connectivity

- Working with internet providers on social value offer

- Promoting 'affordable' connectivity

- Mapping and promoting free internet access / access to devices across TH

- Strategies for repurposing and recycling devices across TH

- Promoting funding for devices and connectivity

- Creating best practice guidance on gifting/loaning devices

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Emerging Actions – Skills, Motivation and Trust

- Employers digitally upskilling staff
- Developing borough-wide best practice on skills provision, integrated into other courses, combining resources, etc
- Targeting work to understand and address skills need amongst those with disabilities
- Developing safeguarding awareness
- Developing and maximising 'digital buddy' schemes linking with volunteering opportunities
- Creating a fixed-term, borough-wide 'Digital Ambassador' role to champion, co-ordinate and drive work forward

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Next Steps

- Continue conversation with partners
- Steering Group - 30 September
- Cabinet – 24 November

Questions & Comments

- Any particular issues missing?
- Your ideas to address digital exclusion in the borough.

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