



Introduction

SCLD's Digital Navigator Board is a group of people with learning disabilities, their carers, and supporters, who were recruited as paid advisers and co-researchers for SCLD's digital transformation project. This project was funded by the Scottish Government's Digital Health and Care Directorate, to explore how the digital transformation agenda taking place across health and social care could be transformative for people with learning disabilities. As is often the case with participatory action research projects, the experiences that people brought to the project meant that we took a broader view, exploring digital inclusion and exclusion beyond health and social care. It is because of this, that the Board feel well placed to respond to **Section 7: Access to Technology**.

What Do You Think?

Which of these proposals do you agree with (if any), please tell us why?

Proposal 1 - We could also consider how to ensure that training is available to people with learning disabilities in digital skills and online safety.

Proposal 3 - We could make more support available to directly help people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people access and use technology.

SCLD's Digital Navigator Board very strongly agree with proposals 1 and 3, and believe that both must take place together if we are to achieve digital inclusion for people with learning disabilities. Through our involvement in this project, we found that there are many excellent digital inclusion projects, and digital innovations, taking place across Scotland.

However, few are specific to people with learning disabilities, with most either generic, subject to short term funding, or taking place within specific social care settings.

We believe that the Scottish Government should fund learning disability digital inclusion coordinators across Scotland to ensure people with learning disabilities can access technology, as well as digital skills and safety training. Their role will be to bring together networks dedicated to finding person-centred solutions to digital exclusion and promoting digital technology and participation for people with learning disabilities. As well as pushing for digital inclusion within services for people with learning disabilities, they would work with existing digital inclusion services to ensure their offer is open and accessible to people with learning disabilities.

As many people with learning disabilities are not in touch with traditional social care services, these networks should include collective and self-advocacy groups, community organisations, families, day service providers, support organisations, health and social care professionals, and people with learning disabilities themselves. This would allow the collection and sharing of examples of success and best practices around digital inclusion, discuss common challenges, opportunities for funding, training and partnership working.

Development of such a model should consider the successes of similar models in [Leeds](#) and Coventry, as well as learning from the Digital Health and Care Directorate's current digital inclusion in mental health and housing workstream. Pivotal, the development of this model must include people with learning disabilities at all stages.

In tandem with developing this model, it is important to invest in organisations, such as [Lead Scotland](#), who are already experts in the provision of learning and training for people with disabilities, in many areas, including digital inclusion, to ensure the continued availability of person-centred support and training in this area.

Proposal 2 - We could gather clear data on the number of people with learning disabilities and neurodivergent people accessing and using technology.

SCLD's Digital Navigator Board strongly agree with proposal 2, and would urge the inclusion of specialist technology within this. Although SCLD's digital transformation project did not actively set out to scrutinise the data available in relation to people with learning disabilities' use of digital across the digital health and social care and beyond, it inevitably served to highlight yet again the inadequacy of the data captured on the lives of people with learning disabilities.

However, while we agree with proposal 2, it is clear that this will be no easy task. We are aware that considerable equalities data improvement work has been taking place across Scotland, recognising the difficulties faced identifying people for vaccinations, as well as understanding the impacts of Covid-19 on different population groups. In relation to people with learning disabilities specifically, work is taking place within health boards to ensure that all people with learning disabilities are identified and invited for newly implemented annual health checks.

It is imperative that this data improvement work does not happen in silos. The Scottish Government, Public Health Scotland and others must take a coordinated approach to this work, including pooling resources to ensure significant investment in local data systems, to lay the groundwork for success across several of the Scottish Government's strategic priorities. Putting in place a reporting structure around this data improvement work would be useful to ensure accountability.

Importantly, this data improvement work must ensure consistent understanding of what is meant by learning disability across data collections, increasing the ability to link this data from different surveys, including whole population surveys, to inform policymaking and strategic planning. One option that SCLD has been pushing for is for all population surveys to include, and consistently follow, the disability and long-term health condition question from Scotland's Census 2022.

This proposal would need to be supported by significantly enhanced analytical resources.

Which of these proposals do you not agree with (if any), please tell us why?

SCLD's Digital Navigator Board agree with all the proposals, as outlined above.

Is there anything else that we should consider in relation to access to technology?

SCLD's Digital Navigator Board would encourage the LDAN Bill team and the Scottish Government to read this response in conjunction with SCLD's response – particularly in relation to data.

We would also encourage the LDAN Bill team to read and consider the digital project report and resources: [Digital Transformation - SCLD](#)

Lastly, the Digital Navigator Board would like to highlight the fact that often people's attitudes are one of the biggest barriers to people with learning disabilities being digitally included.

The health and social care sector, and society in general, often view people with learning disabilities as 'service users' rather than citizens with the right to access and use technology.

It is imperative we spark a cultural change whereby stakeholders are committed to encourage people with learning disabilities to explore and independently use technology, with appropriate measures in place to ensure people can make informed choices about its use. Legislation alone will not achieve this.