Learning from Lockdown: 12 recommendations for action

1. Commit to digital inclusion strategies

We are calling for the UK government and each of the devolved governments to publish revised digital inclusion strategies, setting out how they will build on what has already been achieved in their jurisdiction. These strategies should build on the interventions deployed prior to and in response to Covid-19. They should set out clear commitments and time horizons for eliminating digital exclusion. Annual updates on progress should be published.

2. Prioritise co-production

The new digital inclusion strategies produced by the UK government and the devolved governments should be co-produced with those who have lived experience of digital exclusion. Strategies must incorporate tailored approaches for meeting the needs of different groups including: children and young people; people who face additional barriers related to disability and lack of accessible content or assistive technology; and those with low literacy or English language skills. These approaches should build on the good practice already established by organisations working with these groups, and be delivered through these organisations wherever possible and appropriate.

3. Collect quality digital data

A systematic review of the available national statistics on digital inclusion should be carried out, to ensure that robust, high quality data is provided regularly across a range of key measures, broken down by jurisdiction and by demographic group.

4. Establish a robust baseline

A new Minimum Digital Living Standard should be established to create a deeper, more comprehensive, universally recognised baseline for what it means to be digitally included in the UK. This Standard should be informed by in-depth consultation with the public, including those with lived experience of digital exclusion.

5. Embed across public services

All public services including health, education, energy and social care should build an increased focus on tackling digital inclusion into their work to support individuals and communities, particularly those experiencing disadvantage. Public service providers should assess how this increased focus might support them to achieve their wider public policy goals.

6. Align with anti-poverty efforts

All national and local anti-poverty strategies should include a commitment to improving digital inclusion, and set out interventions to enhance digital inclusion, demonstrating how this will contribute to anti-poverty targets. Ownership of the digital inclusion agenda needs to be shared across government at all levels, while businesses and charities also have vital roles to play.

7. Measure programme impacts

National and large-scale digital inclusion programmes should regularly publish and promote their impact and outcomes data, to support shared learning and contribute to better longitudinal tracking and understanding of progress.

8. Regulate for online harms

The UK government should deliver on its commitment to establish world-leading, effective online harms regulation, based on a duty of care model, backed by an independent regulator. Such an approach would tackle online harms at a system design level, reducing individuals' exposure to harm as well as societal harms while promoting a safer online environment for all users.

9. Invest and build capacity

Further support, resources and incentives should be provided for public, charity and community organisations delivering digital inclusion interventions, locally and nationally, to undertake the activities but also to invest in their own digital capabilities. Local networks should be established to ensure joined-up approaches to design and delivery, effective collaboration and best use of community assets.

## 10. Champion the role of business

The significant contribution from businesses to donate or refurbish devices for digital inclusion initiatives should be recognised and further encouraged. Businesses in all sectors should also be encouraged to invest in the digital capabilities of their employees, to develop a more skilled and confident workforce.

11. Innovate for inclusion

Governments, technology providers and civil society organisations should continue to work together to explore market innovations that reduce the cost of digital access and enhance protection for those on low incomes. This might include building on initiatives such as data donation, zero-rating, expanded social tariffs and public WIFI; or by establishing home internet as an essential utility and giving vulnerable customers the right to greater protections, similar to the gas and electricity markets.

12. Ensure a public safety-net

Public of provision of digital access through libraries, health and welfare services and community organisations should continue to be made available. This will provide a vital digital safety net to those who need it.
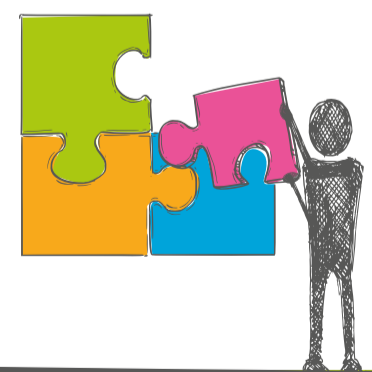
These recommendations have been developed by the Carnegie UK Trust following our work on digital inclusion over 10 years, and particularly drawing on learning and reflections from the coronavirus outbreak and lockdown period. Further context is available below, and for our previous reports and digital inclusion blog series, please visit: carnegieuktrust.org.uk

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