

Digital Inclusion and Drugs Newsletter

October 2024



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This newsletter looks at the connection between digital inclusion and drugs. We have included some definitions below that may be helpful, some of which are sometimes used interchangeably:

Digital - When we're talking about digital, we mean the devices we use, like our computers or phones.

Going online means using the internet, such as using social media or accessing websites for information.

Connecting digitally is how we use technology to connect with others like our family, friends (e.g. via video call), and/or online support services.

Digital inclusion has been defined as our collective responsibility to ensure everyone can benefit from being online. It involves:

- Motivation to engage online
- Access to appropriate device/connectivity
- Skills and confidence to use digital
- Interactions with services that have been designed inclusively ([TEC Scotland](#))

The Connection Between Digital and Drugs

People at risk of harm to drugs are often stigmatised and can face a range of barriers to accessing services, support, and treatment, including online options.

Encouraging digital connection can be a "lifeline", empowering individuals, ensuring they have the choice to access the right support including online support and services, and that they can connect with their friends and family.



What is the real value of a smartphone or device to someone receiving it?

Common Myth: If we give people who use drugs access to devices they will sell, lose or have them stolen.

Reality: As part of their programme, Digital Lifelines found that less than 10% of devices have been lost, stolen, or sold ([Digital Lifelines Scotland](#)).

Now, consider some common sources of information and support for people who use drugs: Crew 2000, Know the Score, Scottish Drugs Forum, or the Scottish Recovery Consortium.

How many times have we signposted to these websites without checking if that person has:

- Access to a device/reliable connection?
- The skills and confidence to use their device and go online?
- The motivation to go online?



Digital Inclusion and Harm Reduction Principles

When supporting someone with digital inclusion it can be helpful to think about how this sits alongside harm reduction principles. Being connected digitally can:

- Lessen the likelihood of being excluded from services
- Help people to realise their human rights
- Provide professionals with another way to collaborate meaningfully with people who use drugs, in addition to face-to-face options
- Allow professionals to meet people where they are, challenging any stigma they have experienced
- Offer ways to access information, including apps and websites. ([Source](#))

Resources and supports



Digital Lifelines - Practitioner Guide

A guide to help frontline practitioners deliver person-centred digital inclusion support for people who use drugs.

From pillars to practice

Developing a framework for embedding digital inclusion in health and social care.

From Pillars to Practice

A framework for embedding digital inclusion in health and social care.



Digital Inclusion Charter

A charter to support, guide, and recognise best practices in digital inclusion work in Scotland.



NHSGGC Digital Support

Information about where to get digital support across NHSGGC, including a '[Where to find digital support card](#)'



Connecting Scotland

Shares information about support for devices and/or connectivity.



Digital Support Helpline

Free digital support/advice on topics like using devices, navigating the web/social media. **0800 0590 690**, Mon-Fri 10.00am–4.00pm.

Learning Opportunities



Digital Champion Training (Digital Lifelines)

Explore how frontline staff can embed digital inclusion work as part of a holistic approach to harm reduction.

Several dates are available throughout October and November, via Zoom.

One Key Learning



If you take one thing away from this newsletter...

When promoting an online service, check in with the person first to see if they have access to:

1. A device
2. Reliable connection
3. Skills
4. Confidence
5. Motivation to go online.