Executive Summary

A digital world for all?

The Problem
Digital exclusion is a significant challenge and reduces long-term wellbeing.

The Implications:
- Inequality of opportunity and a deepening digital divide
- Digital exclusion and social exclusion are known to be linked
- Lower long-term wellbeing

The Barriers
- Low motivation to learn or low confidence in existing skills
- Limited access to the internet or technology
- Limited basic digital or literacy skills

The Assumption
All young people have basic digital skills and are digitally literate.

The Reality
Many young people do not have basic digital skills.
Vulnerable young people are particularly in need of additional support to improve their skills.

What is needed?
- Practical initiatives, action based research, innovative policy interventions
- Improved and extended evidence base
- Raise awareness of the challenge

https://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/publications/digitalworld/
The #NotWithoutMe Programme

- **4 projects**
- **£10k funding each**
- **1 year duration**
  - Jan 2016 – Jan 2017
- **Over 80 sessions run**

100 young people aged 11-25 supported:
- 29 – The Pavilion
- 40 – Young Scot and The Prince’s Trust
- 16 – Mencap in Northern Ireland
- 15 – Signal Film and Media

Creative content outputs:
- 11 Films/Vlogs
- 40+ Blogs
- News stories
- Drama productions
- Radio interviews

Skills improved include:
- Online safety
- Video creation
- Problem solving
- Digital photography
- Peer working
- Increased confidence
- Positive online behaviours

#NotWithoutMe @ the BBC Cross-Sector Event
- 80+ participants
- 224 contributors on Twitter
- 327,000 accounts reached
- Top 10 trending # on Twitter

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The Findings

Working with vulnerable young people on digital projects

• The value of learning alongside peers.
• Intersectionality is important, a diverse range of young people need to be visible and reflected in digital offerings.
• Digital work is useful to explore identity, self-confidence and wellbeing.
• Providing a high level of individual support within a group setting can be problematic due to diverse interests, abilities and motivations.
• Challenges of recruitment and retention, particularly among groups ‘in transition’.

Format for delivery

• Lack of understanding around purposeful digital skills.
• Creating with high-tech kit can be an appealing ‘hook’.
• Co-production with young people is necessary to develop relevant and engaging content.
• The importance of developing digital skills offline.
• Greater appreciation that digital skills training can require long timescales.

Measurement and evaluation

• Standard methods of digital skills measurement are not always appropriate and may not capture the varied types of progression online.
• Digital skills are now invariably considered life skills.

Structural challenges

• Assumptions and presumptions around digital skills can be held by everyone, including young people themselves.
• Lack of other basic skills including basic literacy compound digital skills challenges.
• Advanced skills in one digital area can mask low skills in other digital competencies.

Support Networks & Community Engagement

• The adult support networks for young people, including parents, carers and professionals, would benefit from digital upskilling opportunities.
• Digital skills training is not sector specific and may appear in many different types of initiatives working with young people, such as employability and mental health programmes.

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The Recommendations

Working with vulnerable young people
- Practitioners should take a flexible approach to delivery methods.
- Organisations which already have trusted relationships with young people must drive recruitment and engagement.
- Language to be inclusive and understandable by young people.
- Appreciate that advanced skills in one digital area may mask low skills in other digital competencies.

Format for delivery
- Ensure that digital skills training and content relates to the participants’ real-life context.
- Explore creative methodologies for programme delivery.
- Digital skills development starts offline and ‘offline’ continues to be an important delivery method.
- Engage in discussion with young people about purposeful digital skills.
- Embed digital skills learning into existing long-term skills development programmes in formal and informal education settings.

Community of practitioners
- Consideration should be given as to how meaningful digital skills training can be included as part of initial professional training.
- Provision of appropriate ongoing training for the support networks for young people.
- Promotion of inter-jurisdictional, cross-jurisdictional and cross-sectoral learning.

Measurement and evaluation
- Inclusion of base level measurement other than self-report data, to understand the true starting point.
- Ensure digital skills evaluations utilise a range of qualitative measurement tools and softer indicators in progress evaluation.

Structural challenges
- Counter the ‘Digital Native’ narrative in relation to young people.
- Ensure young people are involved in shaping digital skills projects.
- Specific consideration of vulnerable young people within digital participation strategies.
- Improve understanding into the challenges related to basic literacy in digital skills learning.

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