

CHESHIRE EAST HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD
Reports Cover Sheet

Title of Report:	Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Plan 2023 - 2026
Report Reference Number	HWB 13
Date of meeting:	21 st March 2023
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Health & Wellbeing Board Lead:	TBC

Executive Summary

Is this report for:	Information <input type="checkbox"/>	Discussion <input type="checkbox"/>	Decision X
Why is the report being brought to the board?	For approval.		
Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing Strategy priorities this report relates to?	Creating a place that supports health and wellbeing for everyone living in Cheshire East <input type="checkbox"/> Improving the mental health and wellbeing of people living and working in Cheshire East <input type="checkbox"/> Enable more people to live well for longer <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above X		
Please detail which, if any, of the Health & Wellbeing Principles this report relates to?	Equality and Fairness <input type="checkbox"/> Accessibility <input type="checkbox"/> Integration <input type="checkbox"/> Quality <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability <input type="checkbox"/> Safeguarding <input type="checkbox"/> All of the above X		
Key Actions for the Health & Wellbeing Board to address. Please state recommendations for action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That the Health and Wellbeing Board consider and approve the refreshed Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Plan. That the Health and Wellbeing Board support the proposal that the Delivery Plan is implemented through the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership. That the Health and Wellbeing Board agree to have oversight of the progress made in delivering the action plan. 		

Has the report been considered at any other committee meeting of the Council/meeting of the ICB board/stakeholders?	N/A
Has public, service user, patient feedback/consultation informed the recommendations of this report?	Yes, the draft Plan was influenced by pre-engagement conversations with the public and voluntary and community sector organisations. The draft Plan was subject to a public engagement exercise. The report on this is attached as Appendix Two
If recommendations are adopted, how will residents benefit? Detail benefits and reasons why they will benefit.	The benefits to being digitally enabled are set out within the Plan but in summary can lead to amongst other things: improved health and wellbeing; being better connected socially; assisting with education, learning or work (including securing employment); being able to access information, guidance and advice and to benefit from savings deals on services and shopping.

1 Report Summary

- 1.1 A Digital Inclusion Strategy was first drafted as part of the 'Connecting Cheshire' broadband rollout project. This was updated in 2019. This latest refresh has been informed by pre - engagement with the public and representatives of the Community and Voluntary Sector and considers developments since March 2020 when COVID 19 prompted a significant shift to online interactions. This has deepened the divide for those who are digitally excluded.
- 1.2 The report sets out the context and the challenges facing different cohorts of the population, identifies priorities for action and the evolution of the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Task Group into a Digital Inclusion Partnership that will lead the implementation of the delivery plan.
- 1.3 The draft Digital Inclusion Plan is attached as appendix one and the post consultation report as appendix two.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Health and Wellbeing Board consider and approve the refreshed Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Plan.
- 2.2 That the Health and Wellbeing Board support the proposal that the Delivery Plan is implemented through the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership.
- 2.3 That the Health and Wellbeing Board agree to have oversight of the progress made in delivering the action plan.

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that the need to have a system wide approach to digital inclusion is owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board and its constituent partners, and that support to work as a system on improving digital inclusion is agreed to be priority.

4 Impact on Health and Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

- 4.1 A Cheshire East population which is digitally included and enabled would have impacts on several of the priorities identified within the refreshed Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. These are summarised in the Digital Inclusion Plan.

5 Background and Options

- 5.1 In November 2017 the Cheshire East Council Adults Social Care Directorate Management Team considered a report on 'A Digital Future for Adults, Health and Communities'. Within this it was identified that alongside the development of different technical innovations we needed to consider the digital inclusion agenda to ensure that we did not exclude groups of people because of their inability to use or afford the technology that we were steering people towards.
- 5.2 Accepting that this will become less of an issue, as those of us more familiar with using technology on a day to day basis get older, It was acknowledged that in the short to medium term it remains an issue for a generation who have not had that level of interaction and for others who may not be able to afford the technology or have physical or mental disabilities that might hinder their ability to use IT or access the online world.
- 5.3 To reflect on and consider these issues and how to improve inclusion, an existing Digital Inclusion Strategy (produced as part of the Connecting Cheshire broadband roll-out project) was updated by the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Task Force (CEDIT - included representatives from CVS Cheshire East, Age UK Cheshire and Age UK Cheshire East, the Skills and Growth Company, the Council's Libraries Service, Communities and Partnerships and Public Health). This was approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2019.
- 5.4 That Strategy has now expired and a new Digital Inclusion Plan has been drafted and is presented today. The membership of the CEDIT group that has worked on the new Plan has been broadened over the last couple of years and now includes the ICB, secondary care representatives, a wider range of community and voluntary sector organisations and other Council representatives. The new Plan has taken account of the significant changes that the COVID-19 pandemic has made in relation to the use of online services and the challenges that this poses for those who are digitally excluded. Three broad cohorts have been identified:
- **The Digitally Averse** – do not want to access or use online services
 - **The Digitally Inexperienced or Excluded** – would like to access and use online services but for various reasons are unable to or lack the confidence to do so.
 - **The Digitally Enabled** – have access, are generally confident in their use of online resources, but might like some help to do a wider range of things online.

- 5.5 The Plan acknowledges that for the digitally averse and those who are digitally inexperienced or excluded (who for whatever reason cannot and/or will not be able to access online services), service providers need to maintain other communication channels to prevent excluding people completely. Others within the digitally inexperienced or excluded cohort could be supported to get online and the Plan addresses some of the activities and interventions that would assist this. Many are already up and running (digital buddies, lending of devices, scam awareness training), but there needs to be more effective sharing and communication in relation to these resources/opportunities and a scaling up of provision. Enhanced infrastructure, particularly in rural areas to improve access to broadband, remains an issue. The ongoing rollout of Connecting Cheshire will assist with this.
- 5.6 The shifting of education to online during lockdowns demonstrated that digital exclusion is not restricted to older people and that children and young people and their families are susceptible to being digitally excluded too. The public engagement highlighted the need to consider those who through ill health or disability could not or were no longer able to access services online and to consider what might be done to support these people.
- 5.7 It is proposed that an enhanced Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Task Force (to be renamed the Cheshire East Digital Inclusion Partnership) take the lead on the delivery of the action plan. With a broader membership and more regular engagement with digitally excluded members of the public the delivery plan will be further developed and proposals for supporting digital inclusion within the borough progressed. It is also proposed that the Health and Wellbeing Board continue to have oversight of the Plan to ensure it is owned by the wider system and in recognition that digital inequality is a wider determinant of health.
- 5.8 The use of technology and digital solutions is already a well-established pathway for the future of health and care and in relation to wellbeing. It offers a means to empower individuals and to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of health and care services. However, there will be a need to ensure that through this move to digital solutions we do not exclude those unable or unwilling to utilise the technology. The Plan sets out some of the issues for consideration and offers potential ways forward to minimise the impacts and ensure we work to include people in the digital future wherever possible.

6 Access to Information

- 6.1 The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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