

Solutions4inclusion

Achieving local targets through technology enabled services

Aim: “solutions4inclusion” is an online tool providing local authorities and their partners with inspiring examples of technology enabled services that are improving the lives of disadvantaged people. It aims to build capacity for local authorities to increase performance against the National Indicators, local and regional targets that measure delivery by local government and their partners, improving the quality of life in places and deliver better public services.

What? “solutions4inclusion” provides good practice examples of projects that deliver social inclusion outcomes through technology. Users will be able to search the portal by various criteria (national indicators, excluded groups or exclusion problems) to quickly find examples of inspiring projects. The portal will act as a forum to disseminate the many good ideas and projects that exist on the ground already but which have, to date, received low visibility.

solutions4inclusion is a joint project between the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), DeMontfort University, the Digital Inclusion Team¹ and ESD Toolkit and is part of CLG’s programme to provide support and build local capacity through the use of digital inclusion.

Why? “solutions4inclusion” is one of the tools created through the Department for Communities and Local Government’s Digital Inclusion Capacity Building programme (DICB). The DICB programme is part of the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy².

The aim of the DICB programme is: *to promote the effective use of ICT by local service providers and users in order to support the more effective delivery, by Local Strategic Partnerships, of key social and economic targets set out in Local Area Agreements, the Sustainable Community Strategy vision and local improvement plans.*

The programme has been developed in consultation with stakeholders, including public, private and third sectors. As a result of that consultation the programme is are developing a twin track approach to building LSP and local authority capacity:

- A targeted approach to support local authorities and their partners through a Digital Inclusion Advisor network embedded into the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy
- Communications activities aimed at the wider LSP/local authority audience to raise awareness of digital inclusion capacity building tools and research produced by the DICB programme

DICB programme background: Digital inclusion³ offers local authorities and their partners tools to develop strategic services that will help those most in need. The 2006 Local Government White

¹ The Digital Inclusion Team is the policy delivery team funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government and hosted by the City of London to promote digital inclusion.

² The National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy sets out how central and local government will provide the support that local partnerships will need to deliver excellent Local Area Agreements.

³ Digital Inclusion is defined in this context as “The use of technology, either directly or indirectly, to improve the lives and life chances of people and the places in which they live”

Paper “Strong and prosperous communities” set a new agenda for local authorities as place shapers, working in partnership with other public bodies and the private and third sectors. Local authorities have been given a clear mandate to reach out to citizens who are disadvantaged, and support marginalised or socially excluded communities. Councils are also under increasing pressure to improve performance and engage in new complex ways of working. This is driven by raised service expectations from local people, efficiency targets, the needs of diverse communities and the new local government performance framework, which includes Local Area Agreements and the Comprehensive Area Assessment.

Incremental change is unlikely to be sufficient to respond to the pressures. Local partnerships will need to innovate if they want to achieve a step change in performance and to improve value for money, the quality of services and community engagement

There is a strong correlation between social exclusion and disengagement with technology such as the internet. Around 40% of adults do not use the internet; many also suffer multiple social disadvantages being older, poorer, less well educated and generally economically inactive. It is estimated that 15% of the adult population (over 6m people) suffer social exclusion and are also disengaged with technology. There has been little change in this situation since 2004. With the drive to move government, commercial and voluntary services online, there is a clear risk of those most in need being further excluded.

However, there is also an opportunity. Technology can support the most excluded become more self-sufficient and less dependent on the state – reducing the costs of social exclusion. 1.3m (2.5%) of the UK’s 11.3m socially excluded people are of particularly high cost to Government with an estimated £57.9bn spent each year attempting to tackle and prevent the problems associated with this group.⁴

CLG has recognised the potential opportunities around digital inclusion for local authorities. However, a key factor in achieving digital inclusion outcomes is local delivery, and this in turn is dependent on the capability and capacity of partnerships at local level.

“The innovative use of technology increases the ability of local partners to identify and address the issues in their area and can support multi-agency interventions for those with complex needs.”⁵

Who? “solutions4inclusion” delivers a range of benefits for multiple audiences and functions within local service delivery, including:

- **Chief Executives, Councillors and LSPs:** practical solutions to meeting your Local Area Agreement targets and improving performance against the national indicators.
- **Performance Management:** A repository of intelligence on delivering successful social inclusion services, which demonstrates the clear links between performance management, services and delivery for citizens.
- **Service Directors:** A set of inspirational case studies that will assist in planning activities and support target achievement by illustrating ways to:
 - deliver services to hard to reach citizens who are disadvantaged, and support marginalised or socially excluded communities.

⁴ Statistics taken from “The Digital Inclusion Landscape in England: Delivering social impact through information communication technology” Digital Inclusion Team 2007

⁵ “Strong and Prosperous Communities - The Local Government White Paper” Volume II Communities and Local Government 2006

- promote equality of access to services
 - improve value for money by using innovative techniques and new technology to extend services within a fixed budget
 - deliver efficient and effective outcomes mapped directly to the national indicators
- **Service partners – including the private and third sector:** A capacity building resource that will help partners understand the needs of Local Authorities and provide innovative ideas to assist Local Strategic Partnerships meet their LAAs.

How? The portal will be accessible to anyone with internet access and has been designed to meet accessibility standards. The objective is to enable users to move from a general enquiry about excluded groups, exclusion problems or national indicators to detailed information about individual projects in three clicks. The project has collect best practice projects from the Digital Inclusion Team's own database and others (including ePractice, the ESD Toolkit, Digital Challenge, BT Community Connections, eGovernment and other awards).

When? The service was opened on 24 October 2008.

Where? solutions4inclusion can be found at: <http://www.esd.org.uk/solutions4inclusion>