# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **Digital Inclusion Progress Report & Forward Look 2018** |
| **DATE**  | **18 April 2018** |
| **BY** | **Julie James, Leader of the House and Chief Whip** |

Today I am publishing a Digital Inclusion Progress Report and Forward Look.

The Progress Report provides a summary of the important work that has taken place in the two years since publication of the Digital Inclusion Strategic Framework and Delivery Plan.

Whilst good progress has been made on digital exclusion, there remains a challenge to help people overcome the barriers of lack of motivation, skills and confidence to be able to improve their lives through digital technology. Our dedicated digital inclusion programme, Digital Communities Wales, has provided an important co-ordination role in communities across Wales.

The Progress Report reminds us that tackling digital exclusion is still a vital part of creating an equal society where everybody has the same opportunity to access online public services; find and progress in work; improve their learning opportunities; and save money by purchasing often cheaper online goods and services.

I have seen and heard about the great examples of the life changing impact of our digital inclusion work. People have learned how to use technology and this, in turn, has reduced loneliness and isolation by helping them to stay in touch with friends and family or find new online support networks.

Our incredible young Digital Heroes continue to pass on their digital skills to those in need, often in care homes or hospital settings. The work with and through local schools, such as Griffithstown Primary School in Pontypool, has helped highlight the positive impact on the community that can be achieved through these intergenerational projects.

As we look towards the next twelve months, our focus will be on continuing to explore innovative ways to engage young people in passing on skills to those in need of support. Working closely the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC), we will continue to promote the Digital Inclusion Community Challenge Brief in our Welsh Baccalaureate qualification. This will help further develop and support the growing network of over 600 Digital Heroes across Wales. These Digital Heroes range from primary and secondary school children, Police Cadets, scouts, guides and college students, all with the aim of supporting and motivating more people to use digital technologies in ways that enhance their lives.

Through our work with young people we will continue to encourage girls to consider future careers in STEM roles. We will also support more young women to move into Technology positions through apprenticeships, which is imperative if future demand for Technology skills at all levels is to be met.

We know 60% of those aged 75 and over and 25%[[1]](#footnote-1) of disabled people are still digitally excluded. These people are also more likely to access health and social care services than the rest of the population. Therefore, it is critical that we encourage more digital inclusion activities as part of our digital health transformation work, across a range of health settings. This aligns with the aims of our Informed Health and Care Strategy.

We remain fully committed to providing the strategic leadership for this work. However, there is a need for all sectors, public, private and third, as well as wider society to embed digital inclusion activities as a priority. The challenge remains to motivate those who are still resistant to using digital technologies or who lack the confidence to try to do more online to gain maximum benefit from digital services.

We will continue to look at ways to further strengthen our partnership work in order to support individuals to embrace technology and help us achieve a more digitally inclusive Wales.

<http://gov.wales/topics/science-and-technology/digital/digital-inclusion/?lang=en>

1. National survey for Wales 2016-17 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)