

From Inclusion to Resilience: Celebrating Progress, Shaping the Future

Final Report



September 2025

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
Priority 1: Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors	6
Priority 2: Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care	9
Priority 3: Addressing data poverty as a key issue	12
Priority 4: Digital skills for work and life in the economy	15
Priority 5: Implementing a new minimum digital living standard	18
Recommendations for the future	21
Conclusion	25
Appendix A: Steering Group Members	26
Appendix B: Network Members	27

Foreword

Over the past five years, the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales (DIAW) has grown from modest beginnings into a recognised and influential force for good. Its membership—spanning the public, private and third sectors, from national organisations to hyperlocal initiatives—has worked tirelessly to advance digital inclusion for the people of Wales.

DIAW has not only fostered collaboration, shared learning and partnership among its members, but has also amplified their collective voice. It has become a trusted point of contact for government, public bodies, and other stakeholders seeking to engage with the digital inclusion community in Wales.

Yet digital exclusion remains a persistent and pressing challenge. As public services increasingly adopt “digital-first” approaches—and as artificial intelligence is deployed to boost productivity and address workforce shortages—the risk of leaving some citizens behind grows. In the private sector, the pace of digitalisation has been even more rapid, with many companies now offering only online channels for customer support and engagement.

As this phase of the Alliance draws to a close, it is essential that its successor builds on the foundations laid and continues to champion the work of its remarkable members. This report highlights just some of DIAW’s key achievements and the collective impact of its network. It has been a privilege to serve as Chair of the Alliance. I am deeply grateful to our Steering Group, to colleagues at Cwmpas for their invaluable operational support, and above all to Sara Woollatt, whose dedication and leadership has been instrumental to our success.



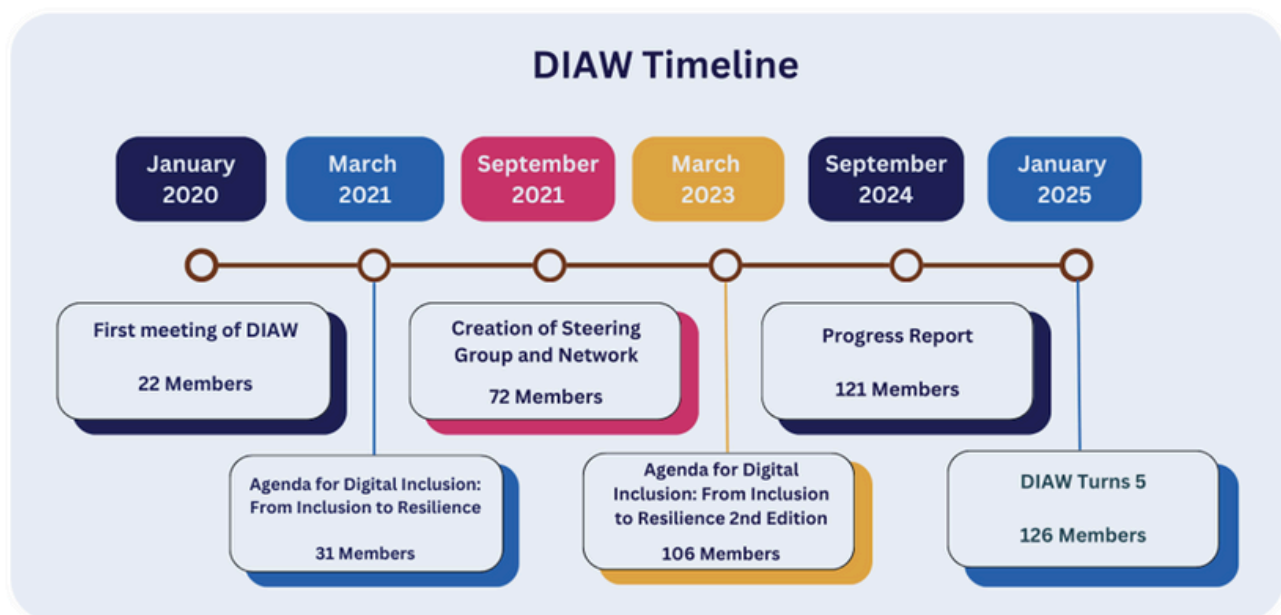
Professor Hamish Laing
Chair, Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales

Introduction

This report marks the conclusion of Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales (DIAW). Since its launch in January 2020, DIAW has brought together partners from across sectors to champion digital inclusion, highlight barriers, and drive forward practical solutions for people and communities across Wales. This final publication reflects on achievements, where challenges remain, and how Wales can continue to build a digitally confident and resilient society.

A Timeline of DIAW

DIAW was set up in 2020 as part of Digital Communities Wales: Digital Confidence, Health and Well-being (DCW), the Welsh Government-funded digital inclusion programme. For the past five and a half years, DIAW has acted as a convening force for digital inclusion in Wales. It has provided a platform for collaboration, influence and evidence-sharing, ensuring that digital inclusion remained a national priority.



DIAW has not only brought people together but also actively influenced policy, practice, and research across Wales.

Convening a Network: DIAW began with 22 founding members meeting in Cardiff in January 2020 and has grown to 126 members by its fifth anniversary in January 2025. Quarterly Network meetings, averaging 50+ attendees, provide a platform for members to connect, collaborate, and exchange ideas. Since the creation of the Steering Group, DIAW has convened 16 well-attended Network meetings featuring a mix of policy, research, and practical presentations.

Influencing Policy and Practice: In March 2021, the Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales (DIAW) launched the first edition of its Agenda for Digital Inclusion: From Inclusion to Resilience, setting out five strategic priorities to tackle digital exclusion in Wales. Originally developed to

influence policy and stimulate action on digital inclusion, these priorities quickly evolved into a practical action plan that shaped DIAW's focus and guided the direction of subsequent Network meetings. A second edition of the Agenda was published in March 2023, reaffirming these priorities while reflecting on progress made and the evolving digital landscape in Wales.

DIAW has consistently represented Welsh expertise in digital inclusion at the highest levels. Notably, the Chair, Hamish Laing, presented evidence to the House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee's inquiry into digital exclusion, alongside representatives from Scotland and Northern Ireland. Members have contributed to shaping the Digital and Data Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales, and the Alliance has submitted responses to numerous consultations on Wales and UK digital inclusion plans, broadband connectivity, Ofcom regulation, and other critical policy areas.

Research and Evidence: To ensure work is evidence-led, DIAW has published the Exploring Impact Reports since September 2023. Each report captured live survey data from Network meetings, analysed relevant policy and strategy documents for key terms such as digital inclusion, accessibility, connectivity, and skills, and included case studies highlighting members' projects on the ground. These reports helped to track progress, share learning, and influence both members and wider stakeholders.

Trailblazing Across the UK: DIAW was the first Alliance of its kind in the UK. Over the years, other regions, including Scotland, Northern Ireland, Liverpool, and Manchester, have sought guidance and support from DIAW when setting up their own digital inclusion alliances.

Connecting and Collaborating: Members consistently highlighted the value of DIAW in creating cross-sector connections. From voluntary organisations gaining access to devices and data, to health, housing, public and private sector partners exchanging insights and replicating successful approaches, DIAW has fostered collaboration that extends beyond meetings. It has also facilitated research partnerships, such as hosting Public Health Wales, the Minimum Digital Living Standard research team and the Data Poverty Lab to engage with a diverse group of Network members.

Steering Group Leadership: The Steering Group, established in September 2021, provided strategic direction for the Alliance, ensuring that decision-making was representative, inclusive, and aligned with the priorities of the wider Network.

Through these combined efforts, DIAW maintained a dual focus: supporting members in their day-to-day work and influencing systemic change to reduce digital exclusion across Wales. The Alliance created a space where knowledge was shared, practice was celebrated, and policy was informed by real-world evidence. DIAW Network members overwhelmingly agreed that DIAW had a positive impact in the priority areas, with 87% agreeing or strongly agreeing to this question in the Exploring Impact surveys.

As DIAW closes, this report provides a final account of progress and suggests directions for future action across the digital inclusion landscape.

Priority 1



Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors

Digital inclusion must be embedded across all sectors in Wales if we are to achieve the vision of a digitally confident and resilient nation. It is not a standalone issue—it intersects with all aspects of life including health, education, housing, employment, and community development. The Agenda for Digital Inclusion 2nd Edition makes clear that digital inclusion is a foundational enabler of the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales, including a more equal Wales, a healthier Wales, and a Wales of cohesive communities. Embedding digital inclusion means ensuring that both service users and staff have the access, skills, and confidence to participate fully in digital life. It also means recognising digital inclusion as a core component of strategy, public sector transformation, private sector responsibility, and community resilience. This priority calls for coordinated action across government, public services, businesses, and civil society to ensure that digital inclusion is not an afterthought but a strategic imperative.

The outcomes for this priority area from the Agenda for Digital Inclusion 2nd Edition are:

- Welsh Government to incorporate our priority outcomes in future iterations of the delivery plan for the Digital Strategy for Wales.
- Build on work already done to raise awareness of how digital inclusion contributes to each of the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales.
- Digital inclusion of service users and staff as a core element of all public sector digital transformation projects.
- Further action by the private sector, including communications providers, SME's and micro-businesses, to address digital exclusion across Wales.

Achievements and Work

DIAW's work under this priority focused on ensuring that digital inclusion was recognised as a cross-cutting issue that affects all sectors. The Exploring Impact Reports published in March 2024 and June 2025 provided an evidence base, combining survey data, content analysis, and case studies.

- 66% of respondents agreed that The Welsh Government's Delivery Plan for the Digital Strategy for Wales encompasses the outcomes from DIAW's Agenda for Digital Inclusion.
- 86% of respondents agreed that they are aware of how digital inclusion contributes to the seven national Well-being Goals for Wales.
- 56% of respondents agreed that digital inclusion of service users and staff is incorporated as a core element of all public sector digital transformation projects.
- 37% of respondents agreed that the private sector is helping to address digital exclusion across Wales.
- 93% agree that DIAW has had a positive impact on organisations embedding digital inclusion.
- 66% of respondents belong to groups where they discuss embedding digital inclusion into organisations.

These figures reflect both the progress made and the areas where further work is needed. While strategic awareness and transformation projects show strong alignment, embedding digital inclusion into procurement, commissioning, and funding decisions remains a key area for improvement.

One of the most revealing pieces of work was the content analysis of the 2023 Well-being Plans published by Public Services Boards (PSBs). These boards bring together local authorities, health boards, and voluntary sector representatives to plan for the next five years. DIAW's analysis showed that while digital inclusion was mentioned in some plans, it was often limited and inconsistent. This highlighted the need for continued advocacy to embed digital inclusion more fully in strategic planning.

This insight shaped DIAW's focus on supporting Welsh Government and the Well-being of Future Generations Commissioner for Wales to connect digital inclusion efforts with the ongoing development of the Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales (MDLS). The MDLS Wales provides a practical, evidence-based framework developed with members of the publish for embedding digital inclusion into local strategies, services, and initiatives.

Our members have been critical to achieving this. Many sit on boards, partnerships, and committees where they can influence decisions. During our Network meetings, members often shared practical examples of how they are embedding digital inclusion in their own organisations. For example, one member highlighted how a housing association integrated digital access into new tenant support plans, ensuring that residents not only had devices but also guidance on using them. Another described how they had integrated digital inclusion into their organisational strategy.

Case studies from the Exploring Impact reports discuss different aspects of embedding digital inclusion. A case study from Digital Communities Wales highlighted how the Digital Inclusion Charter Accreditation provides a structured and impactful way for organisations to embed digital inclusion into their core operations.

"Gaining Charter Accreditation is more than a symbolic gesture, it's a practical framework that helps organisations take a whole-organisation approach to digital inclusion."



Organisations commit to six pledges that guide them to develop staff skills, embed inclusion into operations, support others to get online, allocate resources, share best practices, and build partnerships. This structured approach ensures digital inclusion is not a one-off project but a sustained commitment woven into organisational culture.

Even though the Digital Communities Wales programme is coming to an end in September 2025, the Charter's six pledges remain a valuable tool. Organisations are encouraged to continue using digital inclusion principles as a framework for their own digital inclusion strategies. By creating tailored action plans, they can maintain momentum and ensure that digital inclusion remains a core part of their mission.

Another case study from Tristan Fareel from Velindre University NHS Trust shared how using the Digital Inclusion Charter pledges had helped shape their approach:

“Over the last eight months, the individual pledges from the Digital Inclusion Charter have informed a range of inclusion pilot projects, shaping the blueprint for the Digital Inclusion theme and helping us plan future activities that will support the upskilling of our colleagues, patients and donors.”



Priority 2



Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care

Digital inclusion is increasingly recognised as a key determinant of health. The refreshed Digital and Data Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales (2023) places digital inclusion at the heart of service transformation, emphasising equitable access, user-centred design, and workforce development. This marks a significant shift from earlier strategies, reflecting the growing understanding that digital exclusion can exacerbate health inequalities.

DIAW has consistently advocated for this recognition. Through its work with members and partners, DIAW has helped embed digital inclusion into health and care policy and practice. The Alliance's collaboration with organisations such as Velindre University NHS Trust, Hywel Dda University Health Board, and Digital Health and Care Wales have helped shape a more inclusive digital health landscape.

The outcomes for this priority area from the Agenda for Digital Inclusion 2nd Edition are:

- Every health and care provider in Wales recognises digital inclusion as a key determinant of health and supports patients and carers to have digital access, skills and confidence.
- Health and social care providers and Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) provide training to develop the digital skills of the Welsh health and social care workforce, so that they can participate safely and effectively in digital services and support patients to do the same.
- Addressing digital inclusion is a mandatory requirement in all digital health investment decisions. All digital services and products are designed using co-production approaches or user-centred design principles to meet accessibility standards and the needs of Welsh citizens and our health care professionals.
- The new Digital Strategy for Health and Care in Wales is published with a focus on digital inclusion and which supports the outcomes recommended in Digital Inclusion Guide for Health and Care in Wales 2019.

Achievements and Work

The October 2023 Exploring Impact survey revealed strong engagement with this priority:

- 90% of respondents agreed that DIAW has positively impacted digital inclusion awareness in health and social care.
- 70% are actively discussing digital inclusion in groups and partnerships.
- 67% agreed that training is provided to the workforce, while 47% agreed that support is provided to citizens.
- Only 27% agreed that digital services and products are designed to be accessible, indicating a key area for improvement.

Content analysis of the Digital and Data Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales (2023) and the Digital Health and Social Care Strategy for Wales (2015) shows a marked increase in the presence of terms like digital inclusion, accessibility, and skills in the 2023 strategy. This reflects growing institutional commitment and the influence of DIAW members' advocacy.

Case studies from DIAW members illustrate practical progress. Conor Chipp of Digital Communities Wales shared how insights from DIAW helped shape their work with Cardiff & Vale University Health Board Mental Health Services for Older People:

"We've been working with mental health services to ensure that digital inclusion is part of recovery and support planning. It's not just about access—it's about confidence, trust, and making sure people feel safe online. Hearing how others are embedding this in health settings has helped us tailor our approach."

This quote highlights how digital inclusion is being integrated into therapeutic and support pathways, particularly for vulnerable groups, and how cross-sector learning has informed practical delivery.

Joanna Dundon of Digital Health and Care Wales shared how DIAW's collaborative environment helped shape their internal strategy:

"The DIAW Network has been a great way to hear what others are doing and to share our own work. It's helped us to think more broadly about digital inclusion and how it fits into our digital transformation plans."

Joanna's case study highlights how Digital Health and Care Wales embedded digital inclusion into their strategic planning, ensuring that accessibility and user needs are considered from the outset of digital service design.



DIAW also presents alongside Digital Communities Wales to cohorts of the University of South Wales MSc in Leadership in Digital Transformation, embedding digital inclusion into the education of future public sector leaders. This MSc is part of the Intensive Learning Academies referenced in the Digital and Data Strategy for Health and Social Care in Wales, ensuring that digital inclusion is a core component of leadership development. Simon Read from University of South Wales leads on the MSc Programme and values the input from the Alliance to benefit digital transformation in health and care services in Wales.

“Traditionally public services is very siloed and part of what I want this MSc to do is to break those silos and for students to consider a more subjective point of view. At Alliance meetings you hear about data poverty, the Minimum Digital Living Standard, the Digital Inclusion Charter and other aspects which need to be considered in digital transformation.”



Priority 3



Addressing data poverty as a key issue

Data poverty, defined as the inability to afford sufficient, reliable internet access, is one of the most persistent and complex barriers to digital inclusion in Wales. It affects individuals' ability to access essential services, education, employment, and social connection. The cost of living crisis has intensified this issue, pushing more households into digital exclusion, even those who were previously online.

The Agenda for Digital Inclusion and the Digital Strategy for Wales both recognise internet access as a fundamental need, yet it is still not formally treated as an essential utility. This gap has real consequences: families below the MDLS often sacrifice other essentials to stay connected. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation now includes a digital access indicator, but more comprehensive measures are needed to reflect the full scope of data poverty.

DIAW consistently advocated for coordinated, cross-sector action to address data poverty. This included promoting social tariffs and the National Databank, expanding access to free public Wi-Fi, and supporting the development of the Minimum Digital Living Standard Wales (MDLS) as a benchmark for digital inclusion.

The outcomes for this priority area from the Agenda for Digital Inclusion 2nd Edition are:

- Internet access is recognised as an essential utility in Wales, with Ofcom continuing to strengthen its role as a regulator in its reporting and in its support for vulnerable customers, groups and communities.
- There is co-ordinated, collaborative promotion of available support such as discounted social tariffs for broadband and mobile data and The Good Things Foundation's National Databank.
- There is free public provision of safe and easy to use WiFi, and community-based support for digital inclusion across all areas of Wales.
- Cross-sector collaboration continues to research and design long term, sustainable solutions to data poverty with a specific focus on Wales.
- There should be free and equal access to public services for all people in Wales. Work should be undertaken to allow the current zero-rating of some public sector websites to be extended to all digital public service websites and apps and they should be designed to minimise data usage as much as possible.

Achievements and Work

The December 2024 Exploring Impact survey revealed:

- 83% of respondents are aware of existing solutions like social tariffs and the National Databank.
- Only 1 respondent felt these solutions were sufficient to meet citizens' needs.
- 86% agreed that DIAW has had a positive impact on efforts to address data poverty.
- Access to free public Wi-Fi remains inconsistent: 48% can access it "sometimes" and 36% "rarely."
- 76% believe early steps have been taken to make internet access an essential utility.
- Only 55% are part of a group where data poverty is actively discussed.

A case study from DIAW Network Member Monmouthshire Building Society shows how the organisation recognises the need to support their predominantly older demographic transition to the digital age. It promotes available support through their Digital Champions, who are based in branches and are equipped with information about social tariffs and other resources. The Champions work alongside Budget Buddies who do financial checkups. They collaborate with third sector partners and housing associations to refer members to established programs that can help them get connected. This coordinated approach ensures that members are aware of and can access the support they need.

"The Alliance has helped them understand the specific needs and challenges faced by their members and has facilitated partnerships with local organisations. The DIAW has also provided a platform for sharing best practices and learning from other members' experiences, which has been crucial in shaping their approach to tackling data poverty."

Another case study from Netomnia outlines how their rollout of a new fibre network in Wales emphasises accessibility by working with Welsh social landlords to bring fibre connections to blocks of flats, ensuring that residents have a choice of providers and affordable options. They offer flexible packages such as pay-as-you-go contracts and social tariffs, including an economy tariff of £15 for 50Mbps upload and download speeds.

"Being a member of DIAW has provided Netomnia with valuable local presence and insights. The Alliance has helped us understand the specific needs and challenges faced by communities in Wales. Additionally, the collaboration with DIAW has facilitated connections with other stakeholders and supported the implementation of community led digital inclusion initiatives."



Collaborative working is essential to effectively tackling data poverty. At the DIAW Network meeting held in May 2022, members heard compelling examples of how partnerships are making a tangible difference. The Big Issue shared the challenges faced by their magazine vendors in transitioning to cashless transactions, which necessitates access to mobile phones and data. Their partnership with Good Things Foundation and the National Databank has been instrumental in supporting vendors to overcome these barriers.

Displaced People in Action highlighted the critical need for refugees to be provided with mobile phones and data—not only to access essential services but also to maintain contact with family members in their countries of origin. The response from DIAW members was immediate and impactful, with offers of free data and refurbished devices made within minutes of the presentation. This exemplifies the power of collaboration and underscores the value of having a dedicated space such as DIAW, where connections can be made to support those most in need.



Priority 4



Digital skills for work and life in the economy

Digital skills are essential for full participation in modern society. They underpin access to services, employment, education, and social connection. Yet many people in Wales still lack the confidence or ability to use digital tools effectively. This priority recognises that digital skills are not just a technical issue, they are a matter of equity, opportunity, and resilience. The Agenda for Digital Inclusion 2nd Edition emphasised that digital skills must be developed across all sectors and communities, with tailored support for those who are digitally excluded or lacking confidence. It also highlighted the need for employers to understand and respond to the digital capability of their workforce, and for regional economic programmes to embed digital inclusion into their strategies.

The outcomes for this priority area from the Agenda for Digital Inclusion 2nd Edition are:

- Every adult has access to appropriate, ongoing basic digital skills training and confidence building. This needs to be face-to-face where required; it is not sufficient to put learning resources online and assume that the people who need them can and will access them.
- A digital skills audit of employees across Wales is undertaken by employers and the data gathered is used to make data-driven decisions about digital skills interventions.
- Businesses and employers from all sectors across Wales train and upskill their workforce in core digital skills.
- Data collected by capability frameworks, digital skills audits and other research leads to a commitment to funds to address these with co-produced interventions.
- Growth and City Region Deals work to ensure that digital inclusion remains a priority within the SPF funding stream and that digital inclusion activities are coordinated to avoid duplication.

Achievements and Work

DIAW consistently championed the importance of digital skills for both individuals and organisations. The Exploring Impact Reports from December 2023 and March 2025 show that members are actively working to build digital confidence and capability across sectors.

The Exploring Impact survey results with averages across the two reports revealed:

- 13% of respondents agree that the provision of digital skills training for adults in Wales is sufficient to meet the needs of all adults in Wales.
- Of those organisations that have conducted a digital skills audit of staff and volunteers (22), 71% used that information to make data-driven decisions about digital skills interventions.
- 25% of respondents feel that business and organisations across Wales are training and upskilling their workforce in digital skills.

- 68% of respondents didn't know or disagreed that digital skills interventions funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund were being coordinated to avoid duplication.
- 80% of respondents agree or strongly agree that the DIAW is having a positive influence on the provision of digital skills training in Wales.
- 69% of respondents belong to groups or partnerships where they discuss digital skills training.

These figures show strong engagement with the outcomes, particularly around awareness, training, and strategic discussion. However, they also highlight areas for development, especially around auditing and using data to drive investment.

Recent advancements in Generative AI have added another layer of complexity to digital skills training. Confidence levels in understanding and using AI are particularly low among those who are not digitally confident. The DIAW Network meeting in March 2025 focused on this issue, exploring how to support digitally excluded or hesitant individuals to engage with AI safely and meaningfully. Following the meeting, 63% of members agreed that they feel confident in providing advice and support on AI to the people they work with—highlighting the growing need to include AI literacy in digital inclusion efforts.

Case studies from the Exploring Impact reports highlight the different ways DIAW members are providing digital skills training.

Capgemini's programme spans basic and advanced digital skills training, delivered through partnerships with Digital Unite, The King's Trust, and Code Your Future. Internally, staff are supported through training platforms and encouraged to volunteer.

“Membership in DIAW has provided Capgemini with valuable insights into the digital landscape in Wales...Being part of DIAW has also enabled Capgemini to align their efforts with broader social value goals, particularly in government contracts.”



Digital Confidence Denbighshire, a Shared Prosperity Fund project, offers face-to-face and online training across Denbighshire. It collects data on participant confidence and reports to the Council. Ema Williams shared how being a member of DIAW has helped the project.

“You can start to feel quite insular when you are only working in one county so it is useful to meet others from across Wales to broaden our horizons on what we can achieve here...I always left feeling invigorated about why we are doing this... it inspires you to do more.”

Hywel Dda's Digital Inclusion team delivers tailored training for staff, combining work and life skills. A team-by-team audit enables targeted interventions.

“What we're doing is not a new idea, we've learnt from others and have developed the support we feel is needed and works for the people that we support...Without the Alliance, people would be working in siloes...The Alliance provides that opportunity and supports all members to learn from each other.”

Digital skills are not only essential for individual empowerment but also integral to achieving the ambitions set out in the Digital Strategy for Wales, which emphasises inclusion, public services, and economic growth. The Strategy envisions a nation where everyone can confidently access services, participate in the economy, and thrive in a digital society. The work of DIAW members, through training, audits, and data-informed and co-produced interventions, directly supports these goals. By embedding digital skills into everyday practice across sectors, members are helping to build a digitally inclusive Wales where transformation benefits everyone.



Priority 5



Implementing a new minimum digital living standard

Digital inclusion is not just about having access to devices or connectivity, it's about having the minimum digital resources, skills, and confidence needed to participate fully in society. The MDLS UK provides a clear, evidence-based benchmark developed with members of the publish for what this looks like in practice. It defines the digital capabilities that households need to thrive, including access to devices, reliable internet, digital skills, and support.

DIAW first called for research into a Welsh MDLS in the original Agenda for Digital Inclusion (2021), recognising the need for a nationally relevant framework to guide policy and practice. DIAW actively supported the development of the MDLS, with members contributing to the research team, participating in interviews and surveys. DIAW also hosted the MDLS team at Network meetings and participated in a co-organised, multi-sector event to explore the implications of the findings. This collaborative approach ensured that the MDLS Wales reflects the lived experiences of people and communities across Wales.

The outcomes for this priority area from the Agenda for Digital Inclusion 2nd Edition are:

- The creation of a Minimum Digital Living Standard for Wales for households with children is the catalyst for Welsh Government to commission further research to understand the implications of the Minimum Digital Living Standard on a range of households and communities facing digital exclusion in Wales.
- Effective cross-sector strategies, policies and actions are developed together with financial and political commitment to implement a Minimum Digital Living Standard to ensure that no households in Wales are below the MDLS threshold as part of the vision for digital inclusion in Wales

Achievements and Work

The MDLS research, led by the University of Liverpool, Loughborough University, and the Good Things Foundation with support from DCW and DIAW, focused on defining a digital baseline for households with children across the UK. It used deliberative focus groups, stakeholder interviews, and a UK-wide survey of 1,582 households (including Welsh participants) to identify the digital goods, services, and skills required to thrive in a digital society.

Key findings include:

- 40% of UK households with children fall below the MDLS threshold.
- The MDLS includes not just access to broadband and devices, but also functional, practical, and critical digital skills—such as managing security, evaluating online information, and engaging safely with others.
- The research provides a robust framework for assessing digital inclusion and guiding policy development.

In parallel with the UK research, Welsh Government funded specific MDLS research by the MDLS team in Wales - producing two key reports, available on the Welsh Government website. These confirmed the relevance and usefulness of the MDLS in Wales, explored the perspectives of stakeholders on the needs and barriers to meeting needs within Wales, and enabled in-depth research with a number of families in Wales below the MDLS about what the implications are for their lives. This has supported development of the MDLS for Wales, and also contributed to the evidence base for the MDLS UK project. In addition, Welsh Government has funded MDLS pilot projects with two housing associations, Monmouthshire and North Wales Housing, to test how the MDLS framework could be applied to all household types, not just those with children. These pilots focused on practical implementation, including digital audits, tailored support, and tracking progress over time. Welsh Government have also signalled their intention to put the MDLS for Wales at the heart of procuring a new national survey to support digital inclusion across Wales.

DIAW is pleased to see that Welsh Government has now expanded the pilot programme, offering grants to additional housing associations across Wales. This expansion reflects growing recognition of the MDLS as a practical framework for improving digital inclusion in the social housing sector.

The June 2024 Exploring Impact survey revealed strong support for the MDLS:

- 96% of respondents agreed that DIAW has had a positive impact on the work to create the MDLS.
- 43 out of 45 respondents agreed that further funding should be commissioned to expand MDLS research to other household types.
- 64% felt they understood how to utilise the current research to support the communities they work with.
- Just over 50% of respondents belong to groups or partnerships where they discuss the MDLS.



A case study from Scott Tandy of Newydd Housing Association in the Exploring Impact Report illustrates this approach:

“When tenants arrive, a digital audit using questions based on the basket of goods from the MDLS research will be completed of everyone in the house, not just the primary tenant. That will build a profile of the house’s digital needs which will be received by the digital team who will provide tailored support over time, monitoring the progress.”

Newydd also emphasised the role of DIAW:

“Being a part of DIAW raised my awareness of the Minimum Digital Living Standard and it gives me the opportunity to ask questions, share what we’re doing and learn from what others are doing.”

The development and piloting of the MDLS in Wales represents a major step forward in defining and addressing digital exclusion through a measurable, community-informed framework. DIAW’s role in initiating, supporting, and amplifying this work has been central, from shaping the original call for research, to facilitating member involvement in surveys, interviews, and pilots, and to sharing learning across the Network. The expansion of the pilot programme to additional housing associations is a welcome sign of Welsh Government’s commitment to embedding MDLS approaches more widely. As more organisations begin to adopt and adapt the MDLS Wales, the collective experience and evidence generated by DIAW members will be vital in shaping a national strategy that ensures no household in Wales is left below the digital threshold.



Recommendations for the future

Priority 1 Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors

Looking ahead, the core outcomes for Priority 1 remain highly relevant. Digital inclusion must continue to be embedded in policy and practice across sectors. Welsh Government and the Well-being of Future Generations Office provide critical opportunities to make this happen.

A key part of this will be working closely with Welsh Government to ensure that the MDLS is fully recognised and utilised as a practical framework for embedding digital inclusion across local strategies, services, and initiatives, in a similar way to how the Digital Inclusion Charter could be used previously. In the future, DIAW members must continue their support to embed digital inclusion through practical tools, case studies, and advocacy, while tracking how these efforts are affecting communities.

By leveraging frameworks like the MDLS and continuing to build cross-sector partnerships, Priority 1 can evolve to meet the changing digital and social landscape of Wales—ensuring that digital inclusion is not an add-on, but a core part of how services are designed and delivered.

Priority 2 Mainstreaming digital inclusion in health and social care

Digital inclusion must remain a mandatory consideration in all digital health investment decisions. Services should be co-produced or designed with users to meet accessibility standards and reflect the needs of both citizens and professionals.

Looking ahead, DIAW members and partners must continue to:

- Advocate for inclusive design in digital health services.
- Support workforce development through targeted training.
- Ensure that digital inclusion is embedded in digital transformation work, strategic planning and service delivery.

Continued collaboration between the upcoming digital inclusion programme, Welsh Government, and health and care providers will be essential to ensure that digital transformation does not leave anyone behind.

Recommendations for the Future

Priority 3

Addressing data poverty as a key issue

As we move forward, the outcomes outlined in the Agenda for Digital Inclusion remain critically important and must continue to guide our collective efforts. Internet access must be formally recognised as an essential utility in Wales, on par with water, electricity, and heating. This recognition would enable stronger regulatory oversight and accountability, particularly from bodies such as Ofcom, whose role in supporting vulnerable customers and communities could be enhanced through alignment with the MDLS. By embedding MDLS into regulatory frameworks, we can ensure that internet access is not only available but also affordable, reliable, and sufficient to meet modern digital needs.

The MDLS Wales provides a robust benchmark for assessing digital inclusion and should be used to inform policy, funding decisions, and service design. It offers a clear, evidence-based definition of what constitutes a minimum acceptable level of digital access and participation. Leveraging this standard will help us better understand the lived realities of those experiencing data poverty and design interventions that are both targeted and impactful.

Achieving the vision of a Digitally Inclusive Wales, as set out in the Digital Strategy for Wales, depends on our ability to eliminate data poverty. This means continuing to promote and expand initiatives like social tariffs, the National Databank, and free public Wi-Fi, while also investing in long-term, sustainable solutions through cross-sector collaboration. This again highlights the need for a collaborative, sharing Network such as DIAW to be the key driver in this work, bringing together stakeholders, amplifying community voices, and ensuring that digital inclusion efforts are rooted in equity, accessibility, and resilience.

Priority 4

Digital skills for work and life in the economy

As Wales continues its journey toward a digitally inclusive society, the outcomes for Priority 4 remain relevant, but they must evolve to meet emerging challenges and opportunities. The rise of generative AI, the changing nature of work, and the increasing reliance on digital services demand a renewed commitment to digital skills development that is inclusive, responsive, and future-proof.

Recommendations for the Future

Priority 4

Digital skills for work and life in the economy

To build on DIAW's work, future efforts should focus on:

- **Expanding Access to Training:** Basic digital skills training must be available to all adults, with flexible formats including face-to-face support. Training should be tailored to individual needs and delivered in community settings where trust and familiarity can support engagement.
- **Embedding AI Literacy:** As AI tools become more prevalent, digital inclusion must include AI literacy. People need to understand how these technologies work, how to use them safely, and how they impact privacy, employment, and decision-making. DIAW's March 2025 Network meeting showed strong interest in this area and future programmes should build on this momentum.
- **Scaling Digital Skills Audits:** More organisations should conduct digital skills audits of staff and volunteers. These audits provide critical data to inform targeted interventions and funding decisions. Sharing best practices and tools for conducting audits can help smaller organisations participate.
- **Strengthening Employer Engagement:** Businesses and public sector employers must take greater responsibility for upskilling their workforce. DIAW members have shown leadership in this area and future work should encourage more employers to adopt structured training programmes and align them with national strategies.
- **Coordinating Funding Streams:** Funding for digital skills interventions must be better coordinated to avoid duplication and ensure equitable access across regions. This includes the Shared Prosperity Fund, the UK Government's Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund, and the future Welsh Digital Inclusion Fund. These programmes offer significant opportunities for investment, but without strategic alignment, there is a risk of fragmented delivery. DIAW members can play a key role in advocating for joined-up approaches, sharing learning across local authorities, and ensuring that funding is targeted where it is most needed.
- **Using Data to Drive Investment:** Data from capability frameworks, audits, and research must be used to secure long-term investment in digital skills. The Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS) pilots in Wales will provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of digitally excluded households.
- **Sustaining Peer Learning Networks:** The DIAW Network has proven invaluable for sharing ideas, challenges, and solutions. Maintaining and expanding these peer learning spaces will help practitioners stay informed, inspired, and connected.

By embedding digital skills into everyday practice, policy, and funding decisions, Wales can ensure that everyone regardless of age, background, or ability has the opportunity to thrive in a digital society. The work of DIAW members has laid a strong foundation; the next phase must build on this with ambition, collaboration, and a clear focus on equity.

Recommendations for the Future

Priority 5

Implementing a new minimum digital living standard

The outcomes for Priority 5 remain highly relevant and must now be embedded more deeply into Wales's strategic frameworks. The MDLS for Wales provides a clear and measurable definition of digital inclusion, but its full potential will only be realised if it is integrated into broader policy and legislative commitments, most notably the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

This Act sets out seven national well-being goals, including a more equal Wales, a healthier Wales, and a Wales of cohesive communities. Digital inclusion is a foundational enabler of each of these goals. Embedding the MDLS into the implementation of the Act would ensure that digital access, skills, and confidence are treated not as optional extras, but as essential components of long-term well-being and resilience.

To move forward, Wales must:

- Continue to support MDLS Wales research, and ensure it remains relevant and useful to Wales, and reflects lived experiences .
- Support more pilots across other sectors to test practical applications of the MDLS framework in Wales with a common evaluation framework to capture and share insights.
- Align funding streams with MDLS outcomes to avoid duplication and maximise impact, building on the positive decision by Welsh Government to put MDLS for Wales at the heart of commissioning a new national digital inclusion service for Wales.
- Raise awareness of the MDLS among Welsh public bodies, local authorities, and third sector organisations, working collaboratively to maximise its potential in Wales.
- Integrate MDLS Wales into statutory planning and reporting under the Well-being of Future Generations Act, ensuring accountability and long-term commitment.

DIAW members are already leading the way in applying MDLS principles in Wales. The next phase must build on this leadership, ensuring that digital inclusion is not just a programme or a pilot but a permanent, strategic priority for Wales.

Conclusion

This report marks the culmination of five and a half years of collaborative work through Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales. It has documented the progress made across five priority areas, highlighted the impact of member-led initiatives, and identified where further action is needed to ensure digital inclusion is embedded across Welsh society.

The evidence presented, from policy analysis and survey data to case studies and pilot programmes, demonstrates that digital inclusion is not a standalone issue. It intersects with health, education, housing, employment, public services and community development, and must be treated as a strategic imperative. The development of frameworks such as the Minimum Digital Living Standard, and the growing recognition of digital inclusion within national strategies, show that Wales is moving in the right direction.

As Digital Inclusion Alliance Wales concludes, the work must continue. The priorities outlined in this report remain relevant and urgent. Embedding digital inclusion across all sectors and into the Well-being of Future Generations Act, implementing the MDLS Wales, coordinating funding streams, expanding digital skills provision, and addressing data poverty are essential next steps. The legacy of DIAW lies not only in what has been achieved, but in the collective capacity built across sectors to take this work forward, ensuring that digital inclusion remains central to Wales's vision of a fairer, more resilient future.

Appendix A - Steering Group Members

Present Members

Ashley Bale	Innovate Trust
Simon Cromwell	DVLA
Lindsey Phillips	Welsh Local Government Association
Dave Floyd	Perago
Hamish Laing	Swansea University
Jocelle Lovell	Digital Communities Wales
Myra Hunt & Harriet Green	Centre for Digital Public Services
Nick Speed	BT Group
Emma Stone	Good Things Foundation
Colan Mehaffey	Cardiff Capital Region
Anthony Tracey	Hywel Dda University Health Board
Scott Tandy	Newydd Housing Association
Fadhili Maghiya	Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel
Sion Wyn Evans	Older People's Commissioner's Office

Past Members

Cath Fallon	Monmouthshire County Council
Sara Sellek	WCVA
Judith Stone	WCVA
Alison Pritchard	WCVA
Paula Burnell	Dwr Cymru
George Jones	Older People's Commissioner's Office
Simon Renault	Centre for Digital Public Services
Elin Williams	Disability Wales

Appendix B - Network Members

AbilityNet	Cardiff University
Action for Elders	Care & Repair Cymru
Active Wales	Carmarthenshire County Council
Adra	Cartrefi Conwy
African Community Centre	Centre for Digital Public Services
Age Connects Torfaen	ClwydAlyn Housing Ltd
Age Cymru Dyfed	Community Housing Cymru
Age UK	Community Lives Consortium
Alacrity Foundation UK	Community Managed Libraries National Peer Network
Aneurin Bevan University Health Board	Computer Recyclers UK
Antur Cymru Enterprise - Antur Teifi	Computeraid
Aspire 2Be	ConnectED Cymru
ateb Group	Council for Wales of Voluntary Youth Services
Big Lemon	Creativefront
Blaenau Gwent Council	Cwmpas
Blaenau Gwent Libraries/Aneurin Leisure Trust	Cyngor Ysgolion Sul ac Addysg Gristnogol Cymru
Bridgend County Borough Council	Cynon Taf Community Housing Group
BT Group	Dementia Friendly Swansea
Caerphilly County Borough Council	Denbighshire Housing - Denbighshire County Council
Capgemini UK	Department for Work and Pensions
Cardiff Capital Region	Digital Communities Wales
Cardiff County Borough Council	Digital Health and Care Wales

Appendix B - DIAW Network Members

Digital Services Consortium	Llais
Disability Sport Wales	Macular Society
Displaced People in Action	Magpie Tech
DVLA	Merthyr Tydfil Housing Association
EYST Wales	Microsoft
Family Fund	miFuture
Flintshire County Council	Mirus
Goggleminds	Monmouthshire Building Society
Good Things Foundation	Monmouthshire Housing Association
Grŵp Cynefin	Neath Port Talbot Council
Gwent Drug & Alcohol Service	Neath Port Talbot Council - Adult Learning in the Community
Hafod	Neath Port Talbot CVS
HEIW	Netomnia
Home-Start Cymru	Newport City Council
Hywel Dda University Health Board	Newydd Housing Association
Iberian and Latin American Association in Wales (ILA)	NHS Wales Executive
Innovate Trust	North Wales Recycle IT
Jangala	OFCOM
Learning and Work Institute	Ogi
Learning Disability Wales	Older People's Commissioner's Office
Leonard Cheshire Cymru	Oxford Internet Institute
Life Sciences Hub Wales	PACEY Cymru (Professional Association for Childcare and Early Years)

Appendix B - DIAW Network Members

Panda Education and Training Ltd	Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel
PATH - Pembrokeshire Action for The Homeless	Sunflower Lounge
PAVS	Sustainable Tech 4 Good
Perago	Swansea Bay University Health Board
Piws	Swansea Council
Pobl Group	Swansea Council for Voluntary Service
Powys County Council	Swansea Music Art Digital
Powys Teaching Health Board	Swansea University
Practice Solutions	TEC Cymru
ProMo Cymru	The Big Issue
Public Health Wales	the DigiCoach
Pwynt CIC	Torfaen County Borough Council
Race Council Cymru	Trustmarque
RareQoL Ltd	Unite Wales
Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)	University of South Wales
RWG Mobile	University of Wales Trinity St David
Safe Online Space Cymru	Velindre University NHS Trust
Serco	Walsingham Support
Skills and Volunteering Cymru	WCVA
Social Care Wales	Welsh Local Government Association
Streetwave	Women Connect First
Sub-Sahara Advisory Panel	Wrexham County Borough Council
	YMCO - Young Muslim & Community Organisation



**Cymunedau
Digidol
Cymru**
Hyder Digidol,
Iechyd a Lles

**Digital
Communities
Wales**
Digital Confidence,
Health and Well-being

Darparwyd gan
Delivered by

cwmpas



Rhaglen
Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government
Programme