The Impact of the Digital Rollout on the lives of Children and Young People

EA Youth Service

Information and Data Team

Education Authority Youth Service

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Contents

Executive Summary

Introduction

Education Response to Covid

The Covid Impact

Young Peoples Perspective on the Digital Rollout and Digital Divide

- The Importance of Digital Resources for young people
- Online Safety and Social Media
- Availability of Wi-Fi

The Digital Divide

- Digital Divide and Keeping up with Digital Learning
- Rural Digital Divide
- Digital Poverty

Digital Safety - Youth Service

Signs of Online Abuse

Youth Work Responses

The Importance of Access to Digital Resources

Online Gambling: An Issue for Children and Young People

Conclusion

Recommendations

Appendix

Recommendations Action

Plan

Executive Summary

The digital divide is a common term for discussing access, or lack thereof, to digital technologies. While there are numerous definitions, broadly it can be understood as a division between people who have access and use of digital media and those who do not.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a negative and profound effect on the educational and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. As schools and youth centres reopened the full extent of the pandemic became clear.

The pandemic highlighted the inequalities and difficulties children and young people faced, particularly those from marginalised and disadvantaged communities accessing digital devices.

Initially, many children and young people faced barriers to digital inclusion and learning because Covid 19 meant those from disadvantaged and rural communities, the most at risk, had their education disrupted along with their wellbeing and their ability to participate alongside their peers.

As children and young people moved back to education their appetite for digital learning remained, however, the implementation and delivery by schools and youth centres regressed with young people feeling that this sudden change in learning style was counterproductive to their education and learning needs, with schools not utilising IT resources adequately.

Children and young people believe that the efficient use of smart technology should be preserved, with a greater focus on the use of ICT and devices to ensure good educational outcomes and skill development.

The impact of the digital divide on children and young people from disadvantaged and rural communities ensures that their needs should be taken into consideration in the planning of their learning and developing their digital skills.

Young people face challenges in accessing devices and digital connectivity which has and will have a detrimental impact on their ability to be educated and learn. This was exacerbated during the pandemic with many of them having no or limited access to Wi-Fi and IT devices.

Covid-19 highlighted the digital divide emphasising the inequalities that exist between disadvantaged children and young people and their peers.

There are also concerns that children and young people can be subjected to online abuse or exploitation, such as cyberbullying, grooming, sexting, and radicalisation, their safety, privacy, and their dignity can potentially be put at risk on the internet.

Clear and consistent guidance on online safety should be offered. This may include setting expectations, policies and procedures for online behaviour, communication, as well as providing training and resources on how to use online platforms and tools effectively and safely.

Introduction

Almost two-thirds, 1.3 billion school aged children and young people aged 3 –17 years old do not have access to internet in their homes according to a new joint report from UNICEF and the UN's International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Digitally excluded 11–18-year-olds spend up to 60 fewer hours learning a year.[1]

In December 2021 the UK government issued 1,679,785 devices and 101,652 routers to support children and young people's lockdown learning. However, there have been concerns about delays in delivery, lack of skills and support for educators, safety and security issues, and a lack of at-home support and space.[2]

The Department of Education in early 2021 recognised that the Covid 19 pandemic had highlighted the lack of IT infrastructure across the Youth Service impacting on its ability to deliver online services or engage effectively with children and young people.

Although the statutory youth sector were able to move to online delivery using existing IT resources, some in the voluntary sector struggled to move services online to engage vulnerable children and young people.

The Department of Education, through the Education Authority issued a grant of £1m to all voluntary groups in receipt of Local Area or Project based funding to purchase IT equipment to support the delivery of online services.

Throughout the UK, education sectors reacted quickly by implementing the effective use of targeted digital resource measures to maintain the education and learning needs of all children and young people.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a negative and profound effect on the educational and emotional wellbeing of children and young people. As schools and youth centres reopened the full extent of the pandemic became clear. The pandemic highlighted the inequalities and difficulties children and young people faced, particularly those from marginalised and disadvantaged communities accessing digital devices.

Initially, many children and young people faced barriers to digital inclusion and learning because Covid 19 meant those from disadvantaged and rural communities, the most at risk, had their education disrupted along with their wellbeing and their ability to participate alongside their peers.

As children and young people moved back to education it appears that the appetite for digital learning is still as strong as ever, yet contrary to this, its implementation and delivery by schools has somewhat regressed with pupils feeling that this sudden change in learning style is counterproductive to their education and learning needs, with schools not utilising IT resources adequately.

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[1] https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/two-thirds-worlds-school-age-children-have-no-internet-home

[2] https://www.cypnow.co.uk/features/article/how-to-overcome-the-digital-divide

Children and young people believe that it is important that this efficient use of smart technology is preserved, with a greater focus needed on the efficient use of ICT and devices to ensure good educational outcomes so that pupils work more competently, whilst contributing to an eco-friendly sustainable environment.

The objective of this research is to analyse the impact the Digital Rollout has had and will have on the lives of children and young people and to determine how it has contributed to the education and learning needs and styles of children and of young people.

A total of 120 children and young people a from a range of geographical and educational settings in Northern Ireland engaged with our research through focus group discussions. 26 youth workers participated in the discussions. 12 teachers from primary, post-primary and Special schools were also engaged.

This research piece involves stakeholder engagement events and desktop research based on national and international models, analysing the educational, societal, and mental impact the digital rollout on children and young people, with a focus on online safety and social media. Additionally, this research piece includes several important cases studies linked to the digital rollout.

Education Response to Covid

According to the Online Nation report, nearly all households with school-age children in the UK have access to the internet at home, but 7% do not have fixed broadband and 4% had access only via a mobile phone. One in five children did not have access to an appropriate device for their schoolwork all the time.[3]

During Covid-19, laptops, tablets, and internet access were provided to targeted disadvantaged and vulnerable families. Children and young people who did not have access were supported at this time through access to Wi-Fi and devices, enabling them to access their learning at this time.

It allowed certain year groups who were affected by disruption to face-to-face education at their school or have been advised to shield because they were or someone in their household was clinically extremely vulnerable.[4]

The Department of Education set proposals to lend digital devices to school children during the Covid-19 pandemic. The scheme aimed to support vulnerable and disadvantaged learners, as well as those who had to self-isolate or shield.

The Education Minister Peter Weir agreed a three-stage process for the allocation of digital devices to children and young people who would benefit from the loan of a digital device to support their learning.

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[3] https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0013/220414/online-nation-2021-report.pdf

[4] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/laptops-tablets-and-4g-wireless-routers-progress-data#:~:text=The%20Department%20for%20Education%20is,(COVID%2D19)%20outbreak.

- Stage 1 – meeting immediate need will prioritise using existing school stock.
- Stage 2 – Education Authority to prepare for use, 3000+ new laptops.
- Stage 3 – if needed, preparing for a longer-term requirement, up to 8,000 additional devices to be purchased if required.[5]

The combination of all 3 stages together provided scope to deliver up to 24,000 devices and 3,000 internet connections to children and young people who needed them for remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, the scheme also generated some concerns over online access, such as the availability and quality of the devices and connections, especially in rural areas. The safeguarding and privacy of the children and young people who used the devices, especially when accessing online platforms and services. The digital skills and confidence of the teachers, parents and carers who supported the children and young people with their online learning.

These concerns highlighted the need for more investment, guidance, and support to ensure that all children and young people in Northern Ireland could benefit from online learning opportunities during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic.

In support of this process, the Education Minister Peter Weir agreed a criterion for the distribution of devices via the Education Authority working in tandem with schools. This prioritised children and young people who were in year groups: 3,6,11 and 13, who were entitled to Free School Meals, were on the Special Educational Needs register, Newcomer groups including Asylum Seekers and Refugees and Looked After Children who were considered vulnerable.

Those pupils who were entitled to Free School Meals in these year groups but did not meet any of the other would be considered next for distribution. Subject to availability, pupils who were entitled to Free School Meals in other year groups would be considered on a similar basis as the year groups named above.

The Covid Impact

Covid has had a negative impact on the lives of all children and young people with the effects still being felt. It has disrupted the education and learning of children and young people and particularly impacted the 4 million children and young people already living in poverty in the UK.

It is estimated that 1.7 million children aged 10-17 are living in a household with problem debt and an estimated 2.1 million children of the same age are living in a household where there has been difficulty

[5] https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/education/S75%20Screening%20-%20Criteria%20to%20be%20used%20in%20the%20lending%20of%20digital%20devices%20to ... pdf

paying the bills.[6] The Covid-19 crisis continues to impact low-income families the most as they continue to suffer from financial instability and the cost-of-living crisis.

With pandemics becoming more likely in the future the education sector, formal and informal, needs to be prepared for the possibility that other periods of remote education may be necessary. As the Covid pandemic remains ongoing it is likely that digital remote education will continue in some form with the possibility that there could be instances where individual students or classes need to self-isolate, or because of broader Covid-19 surges as some experts warn may happen[7].

The Youth Service is ideally positioned to support and help bring around positive change for children and young people who are struggling to settle back into education.

Children and young people are particularly vulnerable to developing mental health problems because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Research has revealed that the prevalence of mental health problems in children and young people over the past 3 years has been very high across the world, with females and older adolescents being at particularly high risk.[8]

Children and young people are at risk of being left behind because of a combination of soaring waiting times for health services and the pandemic's disproportionate impact on their mental health, research has shown.

Data analysed by QualityWatch, revealed that the impact of Covid-19 has led to an unprecedented increase in demand for mental health services for children and young people in the UK, most notably for eating disorders.[9]

The pandemic has increased heightened feelings of anxiety and worry amongst children and young people and can exacerbate low-mood and other mental health conditions.[10]

This has been intensified by numerous lockdowns, with many feeling that they are more isolated and less prepared for exams and school. Covid has increased concerns for children and young people with special educational needs or learning disabilities may need additional support to adapt to changes in routine and to understand what is going on.

During the Youth Service consultation with young people in a rural area of Northern Ireland it was evident that many of them felt more anxious and less confident in themselves because of the Covid pandemic. The young people spoke about how the mental health provision in their local schools was inadequate and ad hoc and often left young people stigmatised and labelled as no discretion was show.

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[6] https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-children-and-young-people-briefing.pdf

[7] https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/628843-digital-divide-in-uk-education-during-covid-19-pandemic-literature-review.pdf (pg32)

[8] https
https://www.bmj.com/content/376/bmj.o430.full://jech.bmj.com/content/jech/77/11/704.full.pdf

[9]

[10] https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-children-and-young-people-briefing.pdf

Whilst the prevalence of mental illness is similar in rural and urban areas, the services available are very different. Young people expressed their concerns at the rise in mental health problems amongst young people, which they believe has multiplied since the Covid pandemic.

Interestingly young people agreed that the local Youth Service was best placed to implement counselling sessions for young people, ensuring it would be a place where they would feel safe and more able to express themselves.

One young person stated: *In school everybody knows who is getting mental health support, resulting in people being labelled. The local youth centre is an ideal place for young people to go and feel safe for mental health counselling.*

When education settings reopened after the pandemic the real impact on the education and learning and physical and mental health was evident. Post Covid the young people spoke about how they were less prepared for learning, and some felt that they have never recovered in terms of education and learning and felt as if they were always falling behind.

The young people noted that they wanted teachers not only to care for their education and learning, but also care for their emotional wellbeing and support them when needed.

During the discussion one participant stated: *Many young people need more education and emotional support since Covid, and some young people feel that a teacher they trust is the best person for this.*

Some young people felt that they were academically 2 years behind in school and they were constantly trying to catch up on lost education. The young people spoke about the disconnect with teachers (post Covid) since they returned to school and emphasised the need for school leaders, teachers, and young people to engage positively to build strong collaborative working relationships.

One young person believed that: *The Covid pandemic has had a negative impact on my education and learning and I feel less motivated and more stressed than before lockdown.*

Young people believed that there could be a knock-on mental health pandemic from Covid-19, especially when young people move away from home to go to university. They revealed that the rise of university entrance criteria, which is a worry for them as they must meet the higher standards to get into their course of choice.

During the discussion one young person said: *Our mental health has got worse since Covid, when some of us go to university we will be away from home and away from home for the first time, this will be a shock for some young people as they might have to deal with their mental health problems alone.*

Participants identified the need for schools and youth centres to implement adequate mental health resources to support children and young people. It was suggested by the group that Youth Services could lead this and help bring around positive change for children and young people who are struggling to settle back into education.

Data from the Young Life and Times (YLT) reveals that 69% of young people felt that their education had been negatively affected by the pandemic, with 52% of young people feeling that their mental and emotion health being worse during the lockdown.[11]

Young Peoples Perspective on the Digital Rollout and Digital Divide

The Importance of Digital Resources for Young People

Young people living in a rural communities raised a series of concerns about the challenges and inequalities they faced in accessing digital devices, digital connectivity, having no digital device, no data on their phone, no phone reception, and no Wi-Fi connection, particularly during the Covid pandemic.

There was consensus amongst the young people that they faced challenges in accessing devices and digital connectivity which has and will have a detrimental impact on their ability to be educated and learn. They highlighted how this problem had been exacerbated around the time of the pandemic with many of them having no or limited access to Wi-Fi and IT devices.

The young people believed that having access to adequate digital devices and Wi-Fi was a basic human right and is mandatory to help them maintain and achieve good educational and learning outcomes.

It was apparent that although many young people had issues around the digital rollout in a time of crisis, they were aware of the unprecedented circumstances and challenges the education system faced during Covid 19 and they were grateful as time went on for the resources, learning and support they received from schools and Youth Services.

They advocated for emergency support for those from marginalised and disadvantaged backgrounds with no phone, laptop, tablet, or other devices so they can integrate and complete online activities and homework. This would include mobile data packages for Wi-Fi, access to ICT devices and a place or hub to work from if there is no Wi-Fi connection at home.

Covid-19 has highlighted the *digital divide* emphasising the inequalities that exist between disadvantaged children and young people and their peers. Interestingly many of the young people welcomed the quick delivery of devices and software during Covid 19 and complimented how the education sectors reacted quickly by implementing the effective use of appropriate digital resources to maintain the education and learning needs of all children and young people.

They noted that the digital resources were targeted at disadvantaged children and young people and were generally content with this. However, some young people noted that this was dependent of family income or whether your parents worked.

One young person noted: *I never received a digital device or internet connection because my parents' work. They don't earn much, but I was unable access a device for my learning.*

In this time of crisis when children and young people were forced to work from home, schools and youth centres provided pupils with ICT devices such as laptops, tablets, Wi-Fi connections so they

[11] https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/2020_21/Coronavirus/COVMHEAL.html

could continue learning from home, allowing continuity of education, and learning through online digital lessons and communication.

However, young people noted that schools and teachers were not initially prepared for the learning needs of children and young people during Covid 19. One young person noted: *Teachers were not prepared when the Covid pandemic hit. I had to use my parent's phone to access learning material as I had no device.*

A primary school teacher agreed noting that schools were ill prepared and that there was an expectation that all families had access to mobile devices and broadband. This she noted was wrong and her school had to adapt and innovate to meet the learning needs of pupils.

Another teacher from a rural school noted that it quickly became apparent that not all pupils had access to the internet at home and that connectivity was also a major issue. She noted: *If there were more than 2 children trying to work at home, they had problems accessing the network as the coverage is poor in this area.*

Young people suggested that they struggled to learn and stay focused during Covid 19. One young person stated: *When I got google classroom, I never received the support or instruction from my teacher in how to use it.*

Young people did concede that the learning and support from schools and teachers improved during the pandemic. One young person noted that: *Teachers got more used to using the technology and towards the end we sometimes had online classes where we could see our friends.*

One young person spoke about how the supply of a digital device had helped with their mental health. She noted that many of her friends struggled with loneliness and isolation. The young person recognised the support she had received noting: *The device helped me connect with friends and learn better.* Another young person noted: *When I received my digital device it helped me connect more with friends and teachers and allowed me to work diligently on my own.*

A teacher from a special school noted that his pupils who were already very vulnerable suffered during lockdown through a lack of routine and engagement with teachers and classroom assistants. He noted: *Online learning was not the same for these young people who needed face to face learning to thrive.*

The inconsistent access to services can be detrimental to a young person's learning. Those unable to access digital learning are increasingly at risk of being left behind. They will not be able to interact with teachers or youth workers, complete homework or research projects or apply for further education or career opportunities.

Online Safety and Social Media

With children and young people aged 5 to 15 spending on average 3 or more hours a day online and over 91% having access to the internet at home, research has indicated that they are becoming more vulnerable and exposed to child sexual exploitation.[12]

[12] https://www.knowsleyscp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/7-Minute-Briefing-CSE-and-Social-Media.pdf

Engaging in sexting or the sharing of inappropriate sexual images between young people and their peers can lead to bullying and blackmail which can negatively impact on their mental health.

Young people raised concerns about online safety measures on digital devices they have received from schools and Youth Services to do homework and coursework, as well as some using old laptops that are not fit for purpose. They revealed that are aware of websites that were inappropriate, although they could still access by changing the VPNs or by having a pirate profile.

One young person stated: *I can access explicit content on YouTube from a school supplied device.* Young people explained how easy it was to access inappropriate sites and noted that devices supplied by the Education Authority and the Department of Education should be secured denying children and young access to these sites.

A youth worker agreed noting that these sites were readily accessible to young people who were digital natives. She stated: *It is important that any resources we supply are secured so that children and young people cannot access inappropriate content.*

The rapid growth of social media over the past number of years has created an entirely new medium for interaction between children and young people. Currently it is estimated that there are around 3 billion active monthly users of social media.[13]

One of the main consequences of social media's rapid rise is its relationship and impact on children and young people's mental health.

There was a consensus from the young people that many of them could access social media and non-education content on their devices. One young person stated: *I can use Tik-Tok on my device which was supplied by my school for education purposes.*

The young people expressed the view that social media has a massive impact on the physical and mental health of all the young people in question and spoke about how social media has made young people feel as if they must conform to a certain body image, which in turn leads to anxiety, depression and eating disorders.

They discussed how social media now starts an early age and that children are connected and influenced by its content. Anger was expressed by many on how online bullying is rampant on social media, as well as peer pressure, were some young people feeling that they are being judged because of what their looks and what clothes they wear.

The impact of this compulsive behaviour can have negative consequences if instant gratification or verification is not experienced. This can lead to negative self-reflection, anxiety, and loneliness.

The NI Young Life and Times survey asked young people if they personally had experienced abuse or threats on social media or via messaging services. Interestingly, the results showed that just under half of respondents (48%) had experienced some form of abuse or threats on social media.[14]

[13] https://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/blogs/anxiety-loneliness-and-fear-missing-out-impact-social-media-young-peoples-mental-health

[14] https://www.ark.ac.uk/ylt/2022/Gender_Based_Violence/VWG3.html

Availability of Wi-Fi

Young people noted that many of their peers had faced barriers to internet connectivity and the accessibility of digital devices. They explained that there are limitations of internet capacity and Wi-Fi for those living in a rural area or from a larger household.

One young person from a rural community in Causeway Coast and Glen noted: *The coverage in our area is really bad. You can't depend on it as you never know if it's going to be on or off.* This was also reflected by young people from other rural areas.

It was revealed that some children and young people must go to a public hotspot area to access reliable Wi-Fi. They discussed how public Wi-Fi is unsafe and not suitable for education and learning purposes, which can expose them and compromise their safety.

The group would like to see an app developed that would allow young people to communicate and learn in a safe environment, with no risks.

They spoke about *levelling things up in rural areas* so that they have the digital resources required to ensure they are on a level playing field with other children and young people in Northern Ireland. This was an equality issue which limited their opportunities to participate.

Other young people noted how everything was online now. They were concerned how these factors could negatively impact on their employability and career prospects. One young person stated: Everything is done online now. From applying to university or for a job. If you don't have access to the internet, then you are disadvantaged.

Young people recommended that support should be provided for children and young people who have no digital devices to assist with their learning and social life. This they said should include mobile data packages to support young people who have no or limited access to Wi-Fi.

Young people also believed that Youth Services should become digitally integrated by ensuring all youth centres rural and urban are connected. This would allow young people to work with and socialise with other from different centres. One young person noted: *It is great to take part in programmes with young people from other centres. It would be nice to maintain these relationships digitally in a safe space.*

Moderations by Education Authority staff noted that the devices supplied to Voluntary groups had enhanced their online provision, allowing them to engage with more young people. It was also reported that young people were making productive use of the devices in centres for educational, play and social activities.

The Digital Divide

Digital Divide and Keeping up with Digital Learning

The digital divide is a common term for discussing access, or lack thereof, to digital technologies. While there are numerous definitions, broadly it can be understood as *a division between people who have access and use of digital media and those who do not.*

Digital inequality is also often commonly used, to describe the inequalities in access to and use of digital media, that is the inequalities in the extent to which some individuals are digital excluded or included.

The NI Executive Online Safety Strategy 2020-2025 for children and young people focuses on providing a sustainable online safety infrastructure that enhances and promotes online safety, whilst educating children and young people, their parents, and carers and those who work with them.[15]

Studies have found that formal and informal education is unable to keep up with and develop and provide the necessary basic skills and complementary learning skills parallel to digital learning, therefore it cannot keep up with the digital transformation.[16]

Young people noted that teachers and youth workers require training. They also noted that more investment in digital infrastructure is needed to meet the changing digital education and learning needs of children and young people.

A teacher agreed confirming that not all schools have the same training and resources to meet the digital learning needs of pupils. She also noted: *Not all young people learn the same way and we must be innovative and embrace new learning techniques, particularly on ICT.*

During the pandemic the formal and informal education sectors reacted quickly by implementing the effective use of appropriate digital resources to support the education and learning needs of all children and young people.

However, concerns have been raised with regard to the delays in accessing devices, connectivity issues, sustainable access, online safety and security and lack of skills and support for teaching staff. UNICEF point out that a safe online environment is essential for digital inclusions, noting: *Just having a laptop or even having a phone does not make you digitally included.*[17]

Another study shows that children from less advantaged economic backgrounds perform worse on measures of computer and information literacy and computational thinking than their peers from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

They note, inadequate digital skills are likely another dimension of the digital divide which is likely to affect children and young people from more socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and their ability to engage with online remote education.[18]

Several studies for addressing the digital divide, primarily around device provision reported that teachers felt that the rollout of laptops had been the most useful provision for disadvantaged students, showing that lack of access to devices had been a significant concern.[19] A teacher noted: *Having a device was only half the battle. What if they haven't got broadband at home and can't use it?*

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[15] Keeping children and young people safe: an Online Safety Strategy for Northern Ireland 2020-2025

[16] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/329683360_Creating_A_Sustainable_Digital_Ecosystem_for_the_Gifted_Education_Classroom

[17] https://www.cypnow.co.uk/features/article/how-to-overcome-the-digital-divide

[18] https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/628843-digital-divide-in-uk-education-during-covid-19-pandemic-literature-review.pdf (pg25)

[19] https://www.cambridgeassessment.org.uk/Images/628843-digital-divide-in-uk-education-during-covid-19-pandemic-literature-review.pdf (pg29)

Disadvantaged children and young people in deprived schools are most likely to be impacted by the digital divide as they are least likely to have adequate access to devices and least likely to be in schools that can provide them with devices.

Rural Digital Divide

Children and young people who live in rural areas tend to experience digital exclusion more so than others. With a third of children and young people living in a rural area in Northern Ireland, greater attention should be given to how disproportionately affected they are by the digital divide which has been exacerbated by a multitude of factors such as the Covid 19, the cost-of-living crisis, poverty, transport issues, connectivity, skills, support, and digital safety.

Approximately 215,000 children and young people aged up to 25 years old live in a rural area in Northern Ireland. It is recognised that because of rural circumstances people in these communities will have different needs and therefore a policy or public service that works well in urban areas may not be as effective in rural areas.[20]

Although the digital divide between urban and rural is decreasing there is still a considerable way to go before equality is reached. The barriers to digital inclusion stem from the lack of suitable infrastructure and that large numbers of young people are unable to exploit the potential of ICT because of where they live.

Mobile communication is an integral part of a young person's social life, therefore as we have become increasingly dependent on the internet and other digital technologies, those living in rural communities run the risk of becoming even more isolated.

Young people studying and working in rural communities who relied on the internet were frustrated by the lack of speed and reliability. However, good quality and reliable connectivity is not always guaranteed in rural and remote areas. One young person reported: *We can't take part in online activities that those in towns take for granted.*

Young people felt socially disadvantaged due to a lack of access to digital technology and the speed of their internet connection. A common complaint was that they were unable to communicate with friends through social media, play interactive online games and download music or films.

One boy noted: *Our broadband is so slow. We must move about the house to access the internet and if more than one person is trying to use it, forget about it!*

The young people also noted that limited access to the internet hinders a rural young person's education as they are unable to send or receive homework, access coursework or other online educational resources and materials.

[20] https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/daera/17.18.249%20Guide%20to%20Rural%20Needs%20Act%20NI%20final%20v2.PDF

The young people believed that statutory services must consider how they support young people affected they are by the digital divide. The lack of digital inclusion they suggested contributes to poorer education outcomes and has an adverse effect on the career prospects for young people.

The Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 places a statutory duty on public authorities to have due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing, or revising policies, strategies, and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

The Act defines rural needs as *the social and economic needs of persons in rural areas*. It is essential that the difference between a 'need' and something that is desirable is made.

Young people noted that connectivity issues around Wi-Fi and internet services as well as access to IT devices is a necessity and right to help them maintain and achieve positive education and career outcomes.

Digital Poverty

One of the key factors that negatively impacts the education and learning of children and young people is the digital divide and digital poverty that so many of them face. Many children and young people do not have adequate access to Wi-Fi, have difficulty in accessing suitable IT devices such as Laptops and tablets, partly due to the financial burden placed on families and lack of support from schools and communities.

The lack of digital inclusion contributes to poorer education outcomes and career progression for many children and young people. A teacher noted: *We try and support children as best we can, but our budget is tight, and we do not always have enough devices for all children to use at home.*

According to Ofcom children and young people from lower-socio economic groups are six times as likely not to have access to the internet, and 10 times as likely to not have access to a laptop, desktop or tablet compared with young people from the highest socio-economic groups.[21]

Marginalised children and young people tend to experience digital exclusion more than others. The young people suggested that schools and youth clubs should provide safe and secure communication and internet hubs in local areas to support vulnerable children and young people.

A youth worker noted that having access to additional devices helped his club deliver services during lockdown and that they continue to engage with hard-to-reach young people still digitally. *We know that not all young people want to attend a club, so we maintain contact online to provide support when required.*

Moderation visits by Education Authority staff members confirmed that devices were being used effectively to maintain contact and provide support wherever it was required.

The young people also wanted more investment from Government Departments to ensure the correct connectivity infrastructure links exist throughout all areas of Northern Ireland, with a particular focus on investment in rural community hubs which provide strong Wi-Fi connectivity hotspots.

[21] https://www.cypnow.co.uk/features/article/how-to-overcome-the-digital-divide

Research suggests that children from poorer socio-economic background tend to have less exposure to digital technologies both at home and at school, and consequently may have less well-developed digital skills. Differences in digital skills may be one aspect of the digital divide that is impacting the extent to which children are able to engage in and benefit from online education.[22]

Digital Safety – Youth Service

Online safety is an important topic for children and young people, this became especially evident during the Covid-19 pandemic when they many spent more time online for learning and entertainment.

The Education Authority Youth service can continue to play a vital role in promoting online safety for children and young people, by:

- Providing safe and supportive spaces for children and young people to access the internet and learn digital skills.
- Educating children and young people about the risks and opportunities of the online world, and how to protect themselves and others from harm.
- Empowering children and young people to express themselves, participate and engage online in positive and creative ways.
- Supporting children and young people who have experienced online abuse or exploitation and referring them to appropriate services and resources.
- Advocating for children and young people's rights and interests online, and influencing policy and practice at local, national, and international levels.
- Promote services and learning tools to keep young people safe on social media and online.
- Collaborate with other stakeholders, including young people, parents, carers, schools, tech companies and police, to create safer and more inclusive online environments for children and young people.

At a recent Digital Safety workshop young people were asked “What matters to them, in terms of digital safety?”

Digital Safety was divided into 5 categories for the workshop, with young people asked to rank or prioritise each issue on its level of danger and relevance with 1 being most and 5 being least.

The findings revealed that personal information as being the highest priority, followed by cyberbullying, social media, online dating, and lastly online gaming.

The young people were asked “What solutions did they want to see?” The young people explained that they would like to see the following recommendations:

- Introduce awareness sessions and workshops at earlier stages in curriculum. Solution focused rather than problem focused.
- Introduce VPN software for schools and options for personal use.
- Creation of standardised information packs for parents.

[22] Di Pietro et al (2020)

- Create an App on Digital safety to be rolled out across youth clubs/societies/groups.
- Digital curriculums more regularly as the landscape changes.
- Schools evaluate their discipline policy to be stricter on cyberbullying cases.

Signs of Online Abuse

Online abuse is any type of abuse that happens on the internet, such as cyberbullying, grooming, sexting, or exposure to harmful content.

It can affect children and young people of any age, background, or identity and some of the common signs this is happening to a child or young person may include:

- Spending more or less time than usual online, texting, gaming, or using social media.
- Being secretive, distant, upset, or angry after using the internet or texting.
- Hiding their computer screen or phone from others.
- Having lots of new phone numbers, texts, or email addresses on their devices.
- Showing changes in their mood, behaviour, or appearance.
- Having trouble sleeping, eating, or concentrating.
- Losing interest in their hobbies, friends, or schoolwork.
- Having unexplained injuries, bruises, or marks.
- Having money or gifts that they can't or won't explain.

Youth Work Responses

Research has identified that Youth Services can support those young people suffering from or at risk of online abuse in some of following ways:

- Providing safe and supportive spaces for children and young people to access the internet and learn digital skills.
- Educating them about the risks and opportunities of the online world, and how to protect themselves and others from harm.
- Empowering them to express themselves, participate, and engage online in positive and creative ways.
- Supporting them if they have experienced online abuse or exploitation and referring them to appropriate services and resources.
- Advocating for their rights and interests online, and influencing policy and practice at local, national, and international levels.
- Reporting concerns per the Education Authority Child Protection policy.

The Importance of Access to Digital Resources

Technology can play a positive and important role in enhancing the education, health, and wellbeing of children and young people. Access to the internet became particularly important to children and young people during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many of them had to rely on online platforms and services for learning and socialising.

Young people wanted schools and youth centres to provide relevant resources and services to support the education and learning needs of all children and young people. A digital first approach will allow them to stay connected, giving them access to modern IT resources allowing them to work smarter and have better education outcomes.

One young person stated: *Youth clubs and schools need to ensure that the gains made in terms of their own digital proficiency during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic are maintained and expanded upon.*

A teacher from a primary school agreed noting: *It is important that we harness the good work we delivered in lockdown and explore ways of using digital learning more effectively to support all learning styles and needs.*

Some of the young believed that the digital proficiency in some of their schools had regressed in some of their schools. They believed that the sudden change in learning style is counterproductive and that schools are not utilising IT resources adequately. One young person noted: *There should be a greater focus on using IT to ensure better results and outcomes.*

Young people noted that greater access to digital resources can provide children and young people with opportunities to explore a wide range of information, resources, to support their learning and development.

This access it was suggested would support and enhance their personalised and interactive learning experiences and can cater to the different needs, interests and abilities of children and young people.

One young person stated: *My school provided me with a laptop during the Covid pandemic and have allowed me to keep it for good. This has helped me complete my homework and coursework as well using it in school.*

Lockdown and the resulting isolation felt by many young people provided opportunities for information technology to facilitate communication and collaboration among children and young people, as well as their teachers, parents, carers, and peers, through social media, messaging, video conferencing, and online communities.

Young people noted that online access enhanced their creativity and expression, such as digital storytelling, blogging, vlogging, and podcasting, these activities allowed children and young people to share their ideas, opinions, and experiences online.

Young people highlighted that digital technology could promote good physical and mental health and wellbeing for children and young people, with developments such as fitness trackers, health apps, and online counselling. These they noted help them monitor and improve their health behaviours and outcomes.

One young person noted that the supply of a digital device has helped her deal with low mood and mental health problems. The young person said: *When I received my tablet from school, it helped me learn better and connect with more people which has helped me emotionally.*

However, technology can also pose some risks and challenges for the education, health and wellbeing of children and young people. Unfettered access to online resources can expose them to harmful or inappropriate content, such as pornography, violence, hate speech and fake news, that can affect their values, attitudes, and emotions.

There are concerns that children and young people can be subjected to online abuse or exploitation, such as cyberbullying, grooming, sexting, and radicalisation, their safety, privacy, and their dignity can potentially be put at risk on the internet.

Too much exposure to information technology can create digital addiction or dependence, such as excessive screen time, gaming, or social media use. This can interfere with their sleep, diet, school, exercise, and social relationships.

Youth workers should be aware that online access for children and young people can raise ethical and legal issues, such as data protection, consent, and regulation. These it was suggested can affect their rights and responsibilities online.

Therefore, it is important to balance the benefits and risks of technology and to provide appropriate guidance, support, and education for children and young people, as well as their parents, carers, and teachers to help them use technology safely, responsibly, and effectively.

Young people revealed that they can access online adult content and have access to all social media access on education supplied devices. One young person stated: *I know people who have used sites they shouldn't of have on their device and many young people can access social media.*

Young people noted excessive use of digital devices can negatively impact one's mental health and well-being, and personal and social development.

The NSPCC reported that 45% of children aged eight to 17 have come across material they felt was inappropriate or made them worried or upset, such as content featuring self-harm, suicide, pornography, violence, and trolling.[23]

According to the Children's Commissioner for England, almost half of children have seen harmful content online, and that self-regulation by tech companies had failed.[24]

Amnesty International found that more than half of the surveyed children and young people had bad experiences online, encountering racism, violence, bullying, political persecution, and unwanted sexual advances by other users. 93% of the participants said they had encountered mis- or disinformation.[25]

Youthworks and Internet Matters showed that vulnerable children, such as those in care, with autism, or with an eating disorder, were most at risk from online harm, and that they needed more support and guidance. These surveys highlight the need for more effective online safety measures, education, and support for children and young people, as well as greater accountability and regulation of tech companies. By working together, we can create a safer and more positive online environment for everyone.[26]

[23] https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/inappropriate-explicit-content/
[24] https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/blog/a-public-call-for-online-platforms-to-do-more-to-tackle-social-media-content-which-is-harmful-to-children/
[25] https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/02/children-young-people-social-media-survey-2/
[26] https://www.internetmatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Internet-Matters-Refuge-And-Risk-Report.pdf

Online Gambling: An Issue for Children and Young People

Online gambling is the activity of placing bets on the outcome of games, sports or events using the internet. Online gambling can take various forms, such as casino games, poker, bingo, lotteries, sports betting, esports betting, and fantasy sports.

Online gambling is accessible, convenient, and appealing to many people, especially children and young people who are growing up in a digital world. One young person noted: *I was able to set up an online account with bookies. It was so easy. You only had to lie about your date of birth.*

Another young person noted: *I signed up to about 10 different gambling sites that were offering free bets. It was so easy. A mate of mine did the same and then tried again with a different email address.*

Youth workers and teachers also commented on the accessibility of obtaining an online gambling account. They were fearful that this could escalate with young people getting into debt and the dangers that exposed them to.

Online gambling also poses significant risks and harms to children and young people, who may not be aware of the legal, financial, and psychological consequences of their actions.

Online gambling can affect their wellbeing, development, and future in various ways, including addiction and debt. Online gambling sites also expose young people to content that unsuitable and inappropriate.

According to a survey by the Department for Communities in Northern Ireland, **2.3%** of 11- to 16-year-olds in Northern Ireland were classified as **problem gamblers** and **10.5%** as **at-risk gamblers** in 2022.

There are many webpages and games that have elements of gambling which can impact on children and young people. Some examples include:

Coin Master: This is a free-to-play app game that uses slot machine tactics and social casino features to engage players. It has been criticised for exposing young people to gambling-like behaviour and encouraging them to spend real money on in-game items.

Loot boxes: These are in-game treasure chests that contain items of unknown value. They are often purchased with real or virtual currency and can be found in many popular games such as FIFA, Fortnite, and Overwatch. They have been compared to gambling because they create a sense of anticipation and uncertainty and can lead to addiction and overspending.

Skin gambling: This is a form of online gambling that involves using virtual items, such as cosmetic skins for weapons or characters, as currency to bet on the outcome of games or events. These items can be obtained through playing games, buying loot boxes, or trading with other players. Skin gambling is often unregulated and can expose children to illegal and fraudulent websites.

Young people, youth workers and teachers all agreed that they should be aware of the signs and risks of online gambling and take steps to prevent, monitor and provide appropriate interventions as required. Some of these steps may include:

- Educating themselves and their children about the dangers and consequences of online gambling.
- Setting rules and limits on the use of devices, internet, and money.

- Checking the age ratings and parental controls of the websites and apps the children and young people access.
- Talking to children and young people regularly and openly about their online activities and interests.
- Seeking professional help or support if they suspect a child or young person has a gambling problem.

Youth workers can play a vital role in preventing and reducing gambling harms among children and young people, as they have direct contact and influence with them in various settings, such as, clubs, or communities. Youth workers can help children and young people by:

- Providing accurate and relevant information and education on gambling and its harms.
- Raising awareness and challenging myths and misconceptions about gambling.
- Promoting positive and alternative activities and coping skills.
- Identifying and supporting young people who may be at risk or affected by gambling.
- Referring young people to appropriate services or resources if needed.

By working together with other professionals and organisations, youth workers can make a difference in the lives of young people and help them make informed and responsible choices about gambling.

Conclusion

More research on the digital divide in education is needed, particularly given that online remote education is ongoing for some and that preparations need to be put in place in the result of another pandemic. The expectations of increased use of Education Digital Technology such as in assessment and remote working, planners need to be mindful of the digital divide, both in terms of taking steps to reduce digital exclusion and ensuring that non-digital alternatives remain available.

It is important to recognise that the impact of the digital divide on children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds, ensuring that their needs are taken into consideration in the planning process of such operations. There needs to be greater consideration of digital skills when investigating the Covid-19 related digital divide by policy makers and researchers alike.

The increased digital activity of some services during and post Covid times has, in some cases, widened the reach of support services which do not usually reach into rural areas. This has highlighted the importance of a digital backbone to ensure youth services have the capacity and capability to deliver services to wider cohorts and more isolated individuals.

This lack of connectivity is both a social disadvantage and an obstacle to developing services as well as improving accessibility across rural areas. With the recent Fibre Broadband rollout in Northern Ireland, it is essential that areas that are still affected with poor Wi-Fi and broadband are protected and supported.

Children and young people who are disproportionately impacted by the digital divide need to be identified and supported through the EA Youth Service, so that a resource is available at their nearest centre which allows them to access a digital device that has Wi-Fi. This should be a safe space for young people to come and learn safely in their own communities.

There are certainly some lessons to be learned from Northern Ireland's digital roll out during Covid that will help protect children and young people online.

The Education Authority should ensure adequate and equitable access to devices and connectivity for all children and young people, especially those who are vulnerable, disadvantaged or living in remote areas. Although this may require additional funding, distribution and support from the government and other partners.

Clear and consistent guidance on online safety should be offered. This may include setting expectations, policies and procedures for online behaviour, communication, as well as providing training and resources on how to use online platforms and tools effectively and safely.

We will need better mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the impact and outcomes of digital inclusion initiatives and use the feedback and data to inform future planning and improvement. This may involve collecting and analysing information on the quality, accessibility, and usage of online learning and devices, as well as the satisfaction, engagement, and achievement of children and young people.

Youth services needs to look for opportunities to promote a positive and supportive online culture that respects the rights and wellbeing of children and young people and encourages them to participate and express themselves online. This may involve raising awareness, providing education,

and fostering collaboration among children and young people, as well as their teachers, parents, carers, and peers.

It is imperative that to protect children and young people from online risks issues such as cyberbullying, grooming, exploitation, and exposure to harmful content should be prioritised and are sadly all too common. This may require implementing appropriate safeguarding and privacy measures, such as parental controls, reporting mechanisms, and encryption, as well as providing support and intervention for children and young people who experience online harm.

Recommendations

- Youth Centres, particularly those with an identified need must have adequate digital connectivity, access to digital devices to meet the needs of the local children and young people. These centres must have heat and a safe space for the young people.
- Youth Services should implement counselling sessions for young people, ensuring it would be a place where they would feel safe and more able to express themselves.
- Youth Services must be digitally integrated by ensuring all youth centres rural and urban are digitally connected.
- Youth Services provide guidance around the taking, sharing, using, and storing images of children and young people. This includes information about CCTV and livestreaming online events and activities.
- There must be an appropriate reporting of and measured responses to online abuse of children and young people, ensuring that the responses are rapid, and the correct safeguarding of children and young people is implemented at all times.
- The provision of online safety programmes for all children and young people to reduce the risks they encounter online by informing them on the safe use of the internet and other digital platforms.
- Education Authority online safety measures must be reviewed and analysed so young people cannot bypass online safety measures.
- There needs to be greater research and understanding of the digital skills and digital divide amongst children and young people in formal and informal education to help plan, prepare and act in the best interest of the children and young people, in the instance of another pandemic and remote learning scenario.
- In the event of a future pandemic and where social distancing permits, schools and Youth Services should collaborate to support those who are the most digitally excluded, safeguarding the provision of education, and learning support, ensuring that good educational outcomes for children and young people are protected.
- There is a need for more research into the digital divide and digitally excluded in education, especially with the increased use of IT and Technology in education more generally, it is essential that alternative non-digital options remain available. It is vital that a true picture of the extent of the digital divide that exists in education is recognised and stated to ensure equality and a level playing field for all children and young people.
- Emergency support should be provided for children and young people who have no digital devices, and limited internet connection or no means of communication. This should include mobile data packages to support young people who have no or limited access to Wi-Fi.

Appendix

Appendix 1 - Stakeholder Engagement Event - Digital Divide in Lisnaskea Fermanagh

The EA Youth Service Information and Data team recently facilitated a focus group with a group of young people in Fermanagh to investigate and discuss the barriers and challenges they faced living in a rural area. This included 16 children and young people aged 14 -18 years old from a rural area.

The focus of the discussion was the challenges and inequalities children and young people faced in society. Interestingly the digital divide was a prominent area for discussion.

The young people explained that the main problems they faced many difficulties around Wi-Fi and internet connectivity issues as well as accessibility to IT devices to help them in their learning. The group highlighted that the problem had been exacerbated around the time of the Covid pandemic with many children and young people in rural areas having no access Wi-Fi and IT devices.

They agreed that these components and devices are mandatory to help them maintain and achieve good educational and learning outcomes with the need for emergency support for those with no phone, laptop, tablets, or other devices so they can integrate and complete online activities and homework. This would include mobile data packages for Wi-Fi, access to ICT devices and a place/hub to work from if there is no Wi-Fi connection at home.

It was revealed that devices were supplied to some children and young people during the pandemic, however many did not receive any as their family income determined if they received a device or not.

The Covid pandemic has shone a spotlight on the 'digital divide' highlighting the inequalities that exist between disadvantaged children and young people and their peers. Interestingly many of the young people welcomed the quick delivery of devices and software during the Covid pandemic and complimented how the education sectors reacted quickly by implementing the effective use of appropriate digital resources to maintain the education and learning needs of all children and young people.

During the Covid pandemic the education sectors reacted quickly by implementing the effective use of appropriate digital resources to maintain the education and learning needs of all children and young people.

In this time of crisis when children and young people were forced to work from home, schools and youth centres provided pupils with ICT devices such as laptops, tablets, internet Wi-Fi connection so they could continue learning from home, allowing continuity of education, and learning through online digital lessons and communication.

Appendix 2

Case study: Overcoming rural barriers to youth participation. Sandwell Youth Bus, West Midlands4

Children and Young People were involved in the design and content of The Sandwell Youth Bus. Sandwell council opted for a co-design model, a senior youth officer at Sandwell Council noted that local children and young people acknowledged that their vested interest in the project led to higher levels of support and involvement.

The bus has six laptops with 4G internet access, which children and young people use for social networking, games and to catch up with homework. A full DJ workstation allows young people to develop music mixing and production skills and a dedicated games room includes rocker gaming seats, a PlayStation 4 and Xbox One. The bus also features free Wifi, and this is a major draw furthermore there is a space for workshops, group discussions and one-to-one work.

Funded by Sandwell Council, the second-hand double-decker bus was bought and converted around a decade ago to support detached youth teams. It visits areas where there is no building-based provision or there is a need for the detached service because of antisocial behaviour or other issues. “The main benefit of mobile provision is you can go absolutely anywhere so long as you can find a place to park,” says Allen.

The bus acts as a magnet for young people, says Allen. “It can pull up on an estate and five minutes later you can have 30 young people,” he says. “The bus is a tool we use to get young people to our youth workers, who can then identify the requirements and issues of that particular group.”

There are three detached youth workers on the bus plus the driver, who is also a youth worker. The initial outlay was the main cost, especially the conversion, which cost more than the bus itself. Ongoing costs are around maintenance, fuel, and salaries. However, the bus, which is on the road almost every day, is more cost-effective than running a full-time youth centre, says Allen.

The main challenge when it comes to delivering mobile provision is logistics. “Our bus did well for seven or eight years but then we started to find mechanical problems and it is tricky to find parts for a 25-year-old vehicle,” says Allen. As the bus is owned by the local authority, maintenance is carried out by the in-house transport team which looks after all the council’s vehicles.

Accessibility is also a challenge – a fold out ramp allows wheelchair access but there is no practical way for wheelchair users to access the top deck. “We are able to transfer any of the activities that are based upstairs, like games consoles, downstairs,” says Allen. Sandwell also owns a single decker bus, which is used to deliver education and life skills and has a wheelchair lift.

The Youth Media Bus offers workshops in social media, film making, staying healthy and safe, and drugs awareness, as well as careers advice, support with job applications and open-access fun activities.

Recommendation Action Plans

Recommendation	Action Required
Youth centres will have sufficient digital infrastructure and access to devices to cater to the needs of vulnerable children and young people. Centres will provide safe and secure environments for children and young to learn and achieve.	• Youth Service will undertake regular audits to ensure that digital connectivity and device access is appropriate. • Youth Service will ensure that safeguarding policies are in place and implemented in all its settings. • Youth Services can ensure that all youth centres meet the digital and safety needs of the children and young people providing secure learning environments.
Person/ Team Responsible Youth Operations Team. Funding and Administration Team. Senior Youth Officers and Regional Team leads. CADi	Progress Indicators Increased access to digital connectivity and devices. Decrease in social isolation and marginalisation. Decrease in barriers to learning. Decrease in those disengaging from education. Improved health and wellbeing. Increased access to learning opportunities.

Recommendation	Action Required
Youth Service will introduce counselling sessions for young people to support their experiences online, ensuring that these sessions provide a safe and secure environment where they feel comfortable expressing themselves.	• Youth Services will work in partnership with work professional counsellors or mental health professionals to develop appropriate support programmes. • These services will be promoted through outreach efforts and partnerships with community organisations and key stakeholders. • Regular evaluations will be put in place to ensure that these sessions are effective and responsive to the needs of the children and young people. • Youth Services will create supportive environments where young people feel safe to express themselves and access online resources.
Person/ Team Responsible Training Team Curriculum Team. Senior Youth Officers and Regional Team	Progress Indicators Improved mental health and wellbeing. Increased resilience and independence. Increased self-worth.

Leads. CADi. Stakeholder Engagement Officer.	Reduction in bullying and cyber-bullying. Increased access to secure learning environments. Increased partnership working.

Recommendation	Action Required
Youth Service will ensure that all incidents of online abuse and bullying against children and young people are promptly reported and met with measured responses. This will involve addressing such incidents to uphold the safety and protection of children and young people consistently.	• Youth Services will establish clear reporting protocols and procedures for staff and volunteers to follow when instances of online abuse are identified or reported. • Training will be provided to youth workers on recognising signs of online abuse and understanding the steps to take in response. • Regular monitoring will help identify areas for improvement and ensure that responses are measured and appropriate.
Person/ Team Responsible Training Team. Youth Operations Team. Curriculum Team. Senior Youth Officers and Regional Team leads. Information and Data Team.	Progress Indicators Reduction in online abuse and bullying. Improved mental health and wellbeing. Clear protocols and procedures identified and shared with Youth Service staff. Reporting structures developed and implemented.

Recommendation	Action Required
Youth Service will prioritise digital literacy training and support initiatives within their programmes to equip children and young people with essential digital skills. This will include offering workshops, training sessions, and resources aimed at enhancing digital literacy and bridging the digital divide. Youth Service will develop partnerships with key stakeholders to facilitate access to resources and expertise in addressing digital exclusion.	• Youth Service will facilitate workshops, training sessions and provide resources specifically aimed at enhancing digital skills among children and young people. • Collaborate with key stakeholders to develop resources to address digital poverty and exclusion.

Person/ Team Responsible	Progress Indicators
CADi. Training Team. Curriculum Team.	Improved access to digital resources and learning. Increased partnership working. Increased digital skills. Improved mental health and wellbeing. Increased resilience and independence.