**Transcript – How to get online for free or at low-cost: digital divide webinar. January 2022.**

SARAH:

Hi everybody, and welcome to today's webinar.

My name is Sarah Botterill, and I am the marketing manager for AbilityNet, and I'm here to host today. And just to give a brief intro in a second.

And we'll kick off very shortly but we'll just allow a few minutes for everybody to come in through the virtual doors. And I'll just keep an eye on the numbers of participants we've had a great number of people joining today and we're really delighted

have you here. And the aim for today is to give you an overview and an introduction to some fantastic organizations that are helping to get people who are digitally excluded online.

We're going to give as much practical information as we possibly can.

And so, let me just check numbers as a few people still coming in. And as soon as they start to level off.

I will do some introductions, but just while we're waiting as you can see we've got Good Things Foundation here delighted to welcome, Rob. And we'll meet him shortly and John, who is your inclusion project manager from Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

Fantastic case study of what can be done when people are passionate and work in partnership together. We have our own Chris grant, who is community relationship, Officer, and my colleague, Kelly, other colleague Kelly is in the background driving the

slides and helping me out. And I can see we've also been joined by Alex Hi Alex, who has recently had a promotion is one of our disability consultants, at AbilityNet, but has also spent many years working on our helpline and giving out practical advice

to people looking for devices and support so it's really fantastic to have him here as well.

So, we are over the hundred mark.

And just starting to level out slightly in terms of attendees. So, without further ado, kick off the formal presentation, and if we can go on to the next slide please Kelly.

So just a brief bit of housekeeping. and we are using the Zoom captions today, and if you can't see them, and hopefully you can there is a CC button.

The in the middle of your screen if you just click on that. And then you should see captions, and a live transcript pop up for you. And we prefer to use the q and a window for questions and that could be questions for the panellists, or any tech questions

that you've got. And the main reason we prefer the to use the q and a window is that the chat window can talk noisily for people who are using a screen reader.

And so it's not best in terms of accessibility. And after the webinar we will be making all of these slides available online, a transcript and recording, and you'll get an email, which will give you details of where to find all of that.

And also a follow up email for feedback for ourselves about the webinar, please do fill that in. We do look at those comments.

When people read the webinar and we take that very seriously. Thanks Kelly.

So, I've briefly introduced the panellists, but I think it's much better if they introduce themselves so we'll go in order on the screen so Rob if you'd like to just say a quick hi and tell us where you're from and kind of why you're here today.

ROB:

Everyone, so I'm Rob Shapiro, Partnership and fundraising manager at Good Things Foundation.

We work nationally but I'm based in just near Sheffield.

And today, yeah, I'm really interested in digital inclusion, but we're going to focus a little bit on the landscape, but also a little bit on data poverty what it means and some of the latest schemes and initiatives that are available.

SARAH:

Fantastic. Thanks Rob, Johhn over to you.

JOHN:

Thank you Sarah and Hi everybody, my name is John Duncan, and I’m Digital Inclusion Programme Manager at Greater Manchester Combined Authority. I'm actually with the combined on a secondment from Virgin Media O2 for a year.

So I'm supporting the, the team in in Greater Manchester on all things digital inclusion and supporting with the Mars agenda for change and how it can attack, attack digital inclusion.

So it's great to be here, and looking forward to sharing some case studies and an overview of some of the work that we're doing in collaboration with some great organizations including AbilityNet and the Good Things Foundation.

SARAH

Fantastic Chris you want to say a quick

CHRIS

Hello yeah afternoon all my name is Chris I'm the community relationship officer, based in and Invergordon the highlands.

I covered the north of the UK and looking forward to speaking to you, alongside Rob, and John this afternoon.

SARAH

Fantastic and then Alex do you want to say a quick hello because I know when we come to the q amp a I know we'll be talking to you quite a bit.

ALEX

So my name is Alex Barker, I am currently the advice information officer for AbilityNet, soon to move into a Disability Consultant role. And I've been working on a helpline for more years than I can remember. One of the things that always surprises me is that there are a lot of IT devices out there, but some people find it really really difficult to actually turned both computers and iPads, and more expressing the broadband access.

So, and I'm here to try and answer any questions that might come up on this webinar and to learn something myself.

SARAH

Brilliant.

All right, Kelly. Next slide please.

So, in terms of a brief agenda, and I'll be giving a brief overview of AbilityNet we're hosting today. And then after that I'll be swiftly moving on, and living things to our fantastic panel.

And so, Rob will introduce Good Things Foundation, as he said there's a couple of areas he's going to focus on here in terms of what is the scale of the digital divide.

And then some very practical information about online centres network, and more. And there's some information about, you know, what can happen when people come together and really focus on this stuff from.

And in our involvement in the Digital Lifeline emergency response so Robin Chris will both talk about that. And then Rob will talk about the national data bank which is a real practical solution to some of the challenges that people are facing.

And then John, as we said we'll be giving an overview of what can happen when communities come together, particularly with strong leadership I know those as you say some really good strong backing there from the mayor's office and I think that leadership

piece is important as well. So, if we move on, Kelly thanks.

So, in terms of AbilityNet services, and we are a pan disability charity, who support disabled and older people, in terms of accessing the digital world as it says on the side we believe in a digital world that is accessible to everyone.

And for the purposes of today's webinar will probably be focusing on the support that we give to individuals at home. So, we have a network of now over 350 volunteers who are an amazing army of people who give up their time and offer practical training

and advice to people about how to make the most of their devices, how to adapt, if they've got particular things that they need to do with the technology that they have.

We also have a number of online tools so my computer my way if you haven't come across it please do put that into a search engine is a vast database of how to adapt, different devices on different operating systems everything from a desktop computer to

a smartphone, and there's practical guidance on how to do that on there.

We also offer a range of free fact sheets on specific conditions and impairments on particular devices so if you're looking for an alternative keyboard or a mouse we've got guidance on that as well.

And you will also find those on our website, and there are some links at the end of the presentation which will sign post to some of this. And just briefly some of the other services that we provide.

we also support students in education, and we support. Higher Education establishments as well who are looking to focus on accessibility. We have a range of workplace services, including how to make reasonable adjustments whether you're an employee or

an employer.

And then the other side of charity, and we offer consultancy as well to companies that are looking to make sure that their websites or apps are accessible.

And then we also run and TechShare Pro which is the UK is largest technology meetup as an annual event that we run, bringing people together again convenient people so that they can engage in best practice so we move on to the next slide please Kelly.

Chris, I am going to hand over to you. And at this point, and disappear just briefly, and I'll hand you over to Chris and the rest of the panellists.

CHRIS

Thank you Sarah so yes as Sarah says there's been lots of great tablet, support schemes throughout the UK, particularly during the pandemic. We've seen an emerging need of technology required because you know, let's take it, you know that everyone's been at home. And, but there have been organizations can have stepped to the mark and we've got these four, and which we picked out for there's so many great schemes out there, but we've picked up these four in particular, and for this afternoon I'm only going to touch on to them, and but as you get the slide decks and encourage you to have a look at all four, and certainly other things on the website so the first part one of that is the NHS and the Islington Foundation Trust and, and it's been great

to work with, with the team there. And, you know, we've, we've been supporting people who are digitally excluded so we identified 20 users through their traumatic stress clinic and online during covid 19, and I will see on the website when you want the

story that's the clinical psychologist Julie, Gillard had said that was a huge problem with 22% of the UK population lacking the digital skills needed for everyday life.

And we see that as an organization we're talking to people in the helpline, and they phone up and say they are struggling with that tech, but it's, you've got to go over the first obstacle, first of all, to get them the technology, then it doesn't address

skill set, and it all marries up quite nicely. And then the second one there. I've picked up from the list is the KOMP devices and all. I'm just seeing several names on the chat this afternoon I do know that abroad the KOMP and throughout the communities

and KOMP again, fantastic device, and I work in the side with new isolation. So one button computer, simply does everything you switch it on and the way it goes.

You know, there's no mouse, keyboard anything needed.

And it sometimes removes that loneliness because when someone gets a piece of technology for the very first time we go wow you know what four buttons do we press or What do not press.

And I think that's what puts people off using technology because it's not, it's not too complicated at the same time as we, you and I might think that’s nice and easy to do, but actually someone that they're receiving a device for the first time or someone's

Sadly, we'll look at the device once and put it in a drawer and will I won't look at it, where the KOMP device itself as a say is a one button computer. It's a really as it says on the tin designed for those who grew up before the technology age and have no

experience, and on using a smartphone. The good thing to say about it for example if someone's isolating and you saw this particular June the first wave of the covid 19 pandemic and back in 2020 for, you know, people were afraid to come

out from host to save someone was oh, you know, walking a dog or something was nice. So nice easy option.

If you had the app and on the phone for a family member to send directly a picture of you know what they were doing in that in that area, you know, whether it's a lovely scenic forward or seeing grandkids or something like that.

Nice and easy because you know it's, we just take, you know, into consideration that we send a photo, nice and easily through what type of things but again the KOMP database takes that pressure away.

And then like I said the last two ones. I just touch very briefly on the particular the fourth one the partnering with Age UK in Wiltshire through their click and connect project.

So volunteers have been really busy and Wiltshire and providing support as Age UK receive devices and wheelchair. However, we were able to provide the technical support and familiarization of the device to enable them to move forward.

On that note, and I'll pass across to Rob

ROB

Hi everyone, and thanks for inviting me today.

And for those of you that don't know, just a bit about Good Things Foundation, we're a digital inclusion charity. We advocate for digital inclusion.

We develop programs to support people with access to skills to get online and we work with thousands of community organizations specialist charities across the UK.

We support socially excluded people to improve their lives through digital and digital technology and community action is at the heart of everything that we do.

So I'm just going to do a quick quick tour of the digital exclusion landscape. And just, just sort of touch on some of the initiatives that have happened recently and that are taking place at this moment in time.

So, just to touch on right, what, what is the digital divide, so it's the gap between people who can benefit from digital technology and the internet and those who can't.

And it's really driven by sort of three key things. So it's lack of access to a device connectivity and affordable data, lack of the basic digital skills and what do I mean by that, it's things like how to use an email, how to fill out a form using public

services online shopping online like Chris touched upon really, the things that we sort of take for granted.

You know it's not.

These are the very basics and this is what this is what we're really focusing on.

And then the final one and one of the key ones is really lack of motivation to use the internet, or there's other related barrier so people who have never seen the benefits of going online madness.

They've managed without somehow, especially through this pandemic. And then there's a there's a fear of going online and a real lack of confidence.

So, Digital exclusion it follows similar lines to social exclusion with low income, low educational attainment, and those important community is more likely to be normal unlimited users.

So there is a preconception that older people are more likely to have no or fewer digital skills but digital exclusion operates across all age boundaries and it's not just all the people and coven really expose the digital divide, particularly when it

came to connecting with other people access to services and things like shopping.

Next slide please.

So each year we create a digital nation infographic.

So he gathers together. The statistics about digital inclusion exclusion in the UK and the still, still really Stark.

We've done a lot of background and information on there so I'll share, share the link afterwards with anybody else that's interested in wants to go into a bit more detail but I'll come on to a few key themes and starts that you'll be interested in.

So why are people not online.

So, from the research for people who are digitally excluded.

36% say it's too expensive so they can't afford to be online.

46% say it's too complicated so they lack the confidence or there's concerns around safety and security, and they might and like I said previously might have a fear of using the internet.

And this 37% don't have the right equipment so lacking a device, potentially, and then there's 42% and not interested in don't see a need and being online.

So again it's looking at motivation or, or the confidence and not being able to see the benefits of being online.

So, some, some key stats really when it comes to exclusion in the UK there's still one and a half million UK households that don't have internet access at home.

And there's around 2 million. The struggle to afford the internet and the internet and bills.

There's about 10 million people who still at the foundation level digital skills so not having all of the basics I talked about some of the basics there so using email online form.

There might be a little bit but not a lot. And then, nearly 15 million have very low levels of digital engagement so so being online at all or very small amounts blueprint for to fix the digital divide, it really focuses on three key areas.

So, the first one being improving digital skills so everyone can use the internet for life and work.

And then we believe in a focus on the holistic support and community so embedding digital skills support with organizations that are trusted in those local communities.

And the third one around providing affordable internet access, but also include devices in that. And we're really encouraged by various approaches to provide in devices and we're also exploring how we support the circular economy by making sure no devices

are wasted and to get them into the hands that people, the hands of people that really need them.

So to do this, we have a free, free to join membership networks called the online centres network.

Online centres like I mentioned a trusted places that community where people facing disadvantage often turn to in a time of crisis and digital support is often a small part of the holistic support, they offer individuals.

So digitally excluded people can be put off by going to a college or structured learning establishment, and they prefer to be in a more flexible environment.

People who offer the support, they're not IT managers, they're not coders, they're experts in people and Pete and supporting people with their needs and then digital is just a small part of that support.

So example to some of the organizations. So the traditional community centres specialist charities we'll talk a little bit about one of the programs, later on, but through also through to housing associations to library so we call it hyper local so people

people organizations that are in the heart of communities and are experts in their in their communities.

And so, so just to summarize that we design and deliver social change programs in partnership with lots of different organizations.

Government and we engage train support community organizations provide funding and access to two things I devices and data to put digital inclusion into the social support.

So we look to overcome digital exclusion by working with partners to improve digital skills, access confidence and motivation,

face to face. So, one of these initiatives, was one called Digital lifeline.

And it was an emergency response project getting devices data and digital skills support digital exclusive digitally excluding people with learning disabilities, and that was across England and and supported by DCMS.

We worked in partnership with ability now, and the likes of digital you buy, and also learning disability England.

And as long as, as well as other disability local charities and community organizations, think it was round 150 community partners and distributed around 5500 devices with data, offering both face to face and remote support to help people with learning

disabilities, learn how to use their device safely and confidently.

So the devices data and skills, provided through the project was to ensure that the individuals receiving them aren't left on the wrong side of the digital divide.

And they have the chance to benefit from the connection skills and opportunities that being online can provide.

So working with organizations specialist charities and community organization, it was vital to the success and impacts of the program, given out the devices of data was almost the easy part, but making sure people have the setup and the support was equally

vital and written we really valued our partners like ability now, and local community partners and cafe elite was a great example of the support and the brilliant may see who learn about video call in and apply for a job, online.

So, if you get the chance really check out the video on our on our website.

So I talked about the importance of support, and how important partnership is to a program like this. So I'm just going to hand you over to Chris now to talk a little bit more about abilities notes role in this program.

CHRIS

This is obviously a privilege to work with the good things and nation and the team, and to deliver such a vital service across England, where you can see you there in the screen just know the stats really sing its praises and there is a full impact report

available on our website abilitynet.org.uk, and all that, there's lots of numbers here so just touching briefly so hundred and 21 community partners and accessing services for just over 2878 beneficiaries.

And there was 971 individual beneficiaries but the one of the points I really want to focus on is the assessment part, and it was, again it was a real honour speaking to the beneficiaries.

Before sometimes they received advice, just to understand for the barriers might be, and what you know what could we do to overcome these barriers. So is it putting in a certain type of how was it given them a special case was it given them a stylus.

Could they didn't need headphones because they can hear the things properly.

It was just absolute fantastic and I remember speaking to one, the visual them before. And what we did was we did a follow up assessment with them, roughly between three to four weeks later, and, and one beneficiary.

I've never seen someone smile so much during the pandemic. And he was like, I can do this I can do that now. And it's the simple things that you and I could do today with a device but knows that who had no access to debate whether it's due to the never

really thought they were to or was it really finance was holding them back. And with the DCMS and good things you don't see with them being able to send these Lenovo tablets, and they were obviously brilliant and but we have to give a shout out to the

And but we have to give a shout out to the community partners and on the project because the community partners with the organizations and I know there's some on the call this afternoon, and who really, you know, went over the way to support the individuals

receiving, and that's where we then provided a little bit more support to them around training. And so we give them training through our team here at alternate whether it's access on things like, be my eyes, and seeing the ISO to the visual support it,

in the assessments, but one of the parts of the assessors role was to see. Would that beneficiary really.

days they're not cheap things, whether it was providing a stylist because the phone tapping the screen too difficult. So I think as obviously Rob's touched on this but finding the motivation to try and push to get someone on a new you can't we can't fish

a fish efficiency, you must go online, but if we think we give the skill set and the equipment, all my reason together, you know, find an interest to find the hobby that they may like.

So, from that site, and there is so much. Next slide please.

And as touched on briefly, and there is an impact report, available on our website, adult net.org.uk. And I'm just going to pick out to these numbers and, in particular, so isolated 79% felt less lonely and isolated.

And I think we can all agree we all felt isolated, particularly during the pandemic. Because we you know we're all having to stand and follow the rules, but from our point of view that, you know, a lot of something small like a tablet.

impact to someone's life. They can speak to people, they can, you know, BC 76% felt kind of more connected to friends and family because they had that data, because they had that device, they were able to do that more.

And I think I'm going to go back up there 92% though felt better able to use technology.

I just wonder, you have to think to yourself, without safety programs, you know, from our point of view from Digital Lifeline at Digital a famous around with these people beyond like today.

Probably not.

And I think, you know, with the general support of everyone, we can get everyone online and create this whole digital world accessible to all the other 10.

Thank you Thanks a lot Kelly,

Just see there again, just touching on one of our other case studies Jameela and, and she says there I didn't have anyone visiting, and I couldn't see anyone got myself in a bit of a mess with things like putting it, putting the rubbish.

It was a lot better, keeping in touch, after they got the tablet and as I said, when you get comments like that. It gives you that kind of warm feeling that you know people are making a difference.

and, and it's really a special.

ROB

Okay, so I'm just going to touch on the national data bank but before I do that, I just really wanted to just give a bit of an overview on on data poverty.

So, I'm talks about some of the stats earlier.

So, just going back to them so there's 1.5 million households with no connectivity and, and there's some Citizens Advice research that came out recently that said that one in six broadband customers.

So, people who are already online are struggling to pay their bills between March 2020 and January 2021. So data poverty is, it's very real and I assume you know that's one of the reasons you're here today, just give you a quick definition of what it

actually means so it can be defined as an individual household or communities who cannot afford sufficient private and secure mobile broadband data, and to meet their essential needs.

but it's not a new phenomenon. We want to see the end of day of poverty and they are and connectivity to be affordable for everyone on low incomes and free for anyone on very low incomes and following a pilot last year.

This week sees the scaling of The National databank initiative inviting community organizations and charities, to apply.

It was developed and supported in partnership with Virgin Media O2 was created to give people in a time of crisis, access to free data, working with community organizations and charities across the, the UK.

We've made a commitment sport around 500,000 people.

And we're really excited to welcome a partnership with Vodafone and we really value these partnerships to tackling the issue.

And I think there was a quick comment on there about it some of these initiatives available in Wales so when it talks about the online sensors network there is access to those in the whales area there's also a really good organization called whales Co

done some good work in around digital exclusion but access to the data bank will be UK wide.

But I just want to just bring it back to this isn't the only solution and it must be seen as a long term solution, and it but it's one that's really needed right now.

So it will work also alongside highlighting other initiatives like community Wi Fi initiatives social tariffs, helping to draw awareness to other support or initiatives that are available in this particular area and we've set up something called the,

the data poverty lab looking to bring together all the, all the different schemes and ideas to explore further around that. So this this is, this is, this is one solution but it's they shouldn't be seen as the only particular solution.

So, organizations can apply to access the data, the National Data Bank, and through our website and it's actually opened at nine o'clock this morning.

So if you.

The, there will be links shared with you after this presentation.

Time to access that. And just to give you a bit of a, an overview about how it works so it's a bit people.

The people who will receive the data through the national database, they must be over the age of 18 from a low income household, and that includes people that have no access or have insufficient access to the internet at home.

No or little access when away from home, and also people who can't afford monthly contracts or top ups.

This is really vital and we're so grateful for the support from Virgin Media O2 to make this happen.

Or equally grateful and encouraged by the likes of Vodafone and other telcos are made is making strides in tackling the issue so it's a really big issue.

And something that we're really passionate about supporting and trying to do something about the pass you over to John now.

JOHN

Thanks so much, Rob, and thank you for the, the really great overview so far so, yeah, I'm here to sort of represent, but one of the regional picture that's going on, Rob's claiming a great job of what's going on nationally around about data inclusion

exclusion and data poverty. So, if you could go to the next slide please Kelly.

I say we've in Greater Manchester this obviously a large population. We have to like 1.2 million of our residents who are excluded in one way or another, by the means that Rob's already talked about either accessibility connectivity, lack of digital skills

or motivation to get online and that's impacting a huge amount of our population but like it's been said. It's often this link here to social inclusion as well.

And the fact that people during lockdown have been seeing how you know desperately important it is to be able to connect with people online. We've actually really do believe in passionately believe that social Digital Inclusion is like basic human right,

and connectivity is also a basic utility that everybody should have access to.

So what we've been doing is we've pulled up a few key figures here. 20% of the population of Greater Manchester live in social housing, and all that amounts that we're talking about 250,000 people there about 60% of those people are excluded in one way

in one way or another. So we need to be able to tackle this, but we want to have a really joined up approach about how we do this, working together with our colleagues on the ground, and people in voluntary sector and whole range of of our organizations.

And during this brief update I'm going to give, I'm going to talk about care leaves in a specific group that we're working with.

But Kelly if you can move to the next slide please.

So, back in, 2021, and as part of the mayor's reelection campaign so undue burden when he got reelected as the mayor for Greater Manchester.

He recognized it as a real issue around digital poverty, and he said about an agenda pledge to end digital poverty in Greater Manchester by the end of 2324.

Now, the whole reason for the Digital Inclusion agenda is the must be based on evidence and getting the research base to make sure that we are making impactful inputs into tackling digital exclusion.

And as Rob mentioned before, there's particularly groups that are more likely to be digitally excluded. So we've pulled some work out to make sure that we specifically target these people, and we focused on on the 25 over 75 and disabled people.

By recognizing this, we also they'll help to make sure that we're addressing everybody who may be excluded in one way or another.

The key thing about our agenda in Greater Manchester though is is all about what has been happening on the ground is all about local service delivery.

It's about the trusted partners that people will happily engage with the communities out there who are doing amazing work already, but we're using our voice is great too much to connects people up to amplify the messages that are out there to make sure

sure that data capture and assessment we get a really really strong picture of how we can tackle Digital Inclusion together.

Next slide please.

So, in Greater Manchester we've got a number of organizations that we set up structures that we set up to make sure that we're attacking and digitally, an exclusion.

So we established a digital inclusion Action Network, which is LED and chaired by on there. And this is a regular meeting that we have every month where we help steer the options that we're going to take the projects that we're going to work on, which

are tackling dislike exclusion in those key groups.

Now that group is 25, people from a range of different organizations from telcos business from House providers, from the charity sector and disabled groups, and a number of other organizations, including our local authorities.

The next group which is really key to the work that we're doing is digital inclusion Task Force. Now these are the voluntary sector organizations charities businesses.

Anybody who's got a real interest in digital exclusion and a doing some sort of work and to help address that challenge. And we've coordinated this group and put it structure into place where we meet every two months that we have regular touch phone newsletter.

And we have meetings on a one to one basis to understand that amplified the great work that these organizations are doing. And I will come to one of those in a bit when we're talking about the projects that we're working on.

We also have the Greater Manchester Digital Inclusion LA County leads. So for those who don't know Greater Manchester is made up of 10 local porous and each one of those breweries has got a digital inclusion lead in that has been funded by monitors come

come from the adult education budget in Greater Manchester. So recognizing that actually by enabling people in digital skills, we can actually make sure that our digital workforce across Greater Manchester is enhanced and we're helping that economy of

Manchester, which has actually been highlighted in our digital blueprint and strategy about empowering people about making Greater Manchester a great place for people to work from, and for in tracked investment. We also connected with the, with recreated

the Digital Inclusion National Forum so my colleague been appearing. Who is the lead on digital inclusion for Greater Manchester.

We wanted to share our work. So as an approach that we're doing great Manchester. It's what can we share and also learn from other areas across the UK because this obviously is a national problem, but would like to share our best practice.

I find that we're also doing our best to sort of lobby governments and help with policy change where we can to make sure that digital inclusion is embedded into policies across all the departments in, and it might all.

Next slide please.

So, this is our framework and basically don't want to look too deeply into this but this is helpful for you perhaps to look at when you get the slide deck, but I'm just going to focus on activity area for of our framework here.

And that's all about access to spaces, devices connectivity and data, specifically one of our key areas that we've got to make sure that we can address in Greater Manchester.

And that's how we've looked at some of the projects that we're going to, we are delivering in the area. So next slide please Kelly.

So what we have is we've got the colleagues initiative which are going to go a bit more detail on.

We have a tech fund which was set up originally as a responsive image response to the Coby 19 outbreak back in March 20 2020 actually how we can continue to do that where people can get access to devices once they've been donated by partners, and organizations

and business. So where can we actually make sure that people get access to these devices.

And the other thing we're working on is, I mentioned earlier about social housing and it's a really key thing for us, we're working with major telcos communication companies to address the on affordable connectivity that we have in Greater Manchester

by working on a pilot program where we can see if we can get discounted broadband for those who can't afford it, and free, a safety net of free connectivity for those who can't who are identified as being excluded by their social housing provider.

We've also conducted a discovery, which is sort of bringing out those key challenges around about digital inclusion in Greater Manchester. So we really wanted to focus on what we can do better, to support people, and what are those key areas that there's

still a gap. What can we as great to manage to do to enhance the messages of the great work that's going on out there, or use our input to make sure that it's really big impacts on delivering on digital inclusion.

So the one I really want to talk about though is the Care Leavers initiative. Now we have 4200, young people in Greater Manchester, who are Care Leavers and works been taken place to understand that these people tend to be are highly likely to be digitally excluded

in one way or another, ie the couch for connectivity or they don't have connectivity, they're moving into independent living. And they may have some challenges around about access to a device or digital skills to help them get access into education.

Further Education careers are trading.

So what we've done is we've partnered with the Good Things Foundation. By utilizing the national data bank which Rob mentioned, which was with Virgin Media out to.

So, the idea being is that we've coordinated with the local authority to identify where these Kelly bizarre understand the need that they have about digital access, and digital skills, what would make it really helpful for them to get the benefit of get

access to skills and devices and connectivity. But then, using the organizations that we have to get in touch with the online centres. So these young people can be identified.

Get Free data for a six month period, and then go for the learn my way digital program digital skills program to enhance them to be able to go and you know support them with daily living, access to services on an NHS services for example or financial

connecting with their housing provider or their landlords to making sure that that using digital really can make a real massive positive difference for them. It's been an absolute pleasure to work with national data bank, working with Rob at the Good

Things Foundation.

And so it's great to see that on a local level we're able to support people get that access, and that's just one way we can connect up.

So that's a quick overview from me, and on to the next, which I think we're going back to Rob or Sarah.

SARAH

It’s me Hello, everybody. Well, firstly I just want to say thank you very much to all the panellists for doing such a great job and absolutely bang on in terms

of time as well which is fantastic because it's really important to me that we've got 15 minutes now for some Q and A's, and I've seen some coming through Kelly, is there a question in the chat that you can read out.

Or I can have a look.

Okay, so.

And so there's somebody here who is looking to provide says members of the centre within unlimited in economical data package for more than 100 people.

I don't know if the panellists have got any suggestions about how to approach that particular challenge.

ROB

Yeah, I could pick that up if you want. I'm happy. Great. Yeah, so it sounds like a slum. Yeah, get in touch with Good Things Foundation.

Big so register yourself as an online Centre, which will give you the opportunity to apply.

Sounds like we might be able to support you with that. Obviously we just take some details from you.

But yeah, that's exactly what we're what the data bank is for.

So, yeah, please feel free to get in touch and we'll explore that further.

SARAH

That's brilliant. Thank you.

And, and there's a question here from Sharon it says many broadband providers have cheaper deals social tarrifs where people on Universal Credit are eligible, but do not include pension credit and she's asking why I'm aware of the Universal Credit

but I don't know why, or anything about that is only one able to pick that up.

ROB

If you want.

So, I can't answer the question. As such, but I have got a vehicle to raise this issue.

Like I mentioned, we have the data poverty lab it's just research into, into data poverty but it also feeds into government as well. and as telcos so I can't answer that question now Sharon, but I think that's a really valid question.

And a really interesting challenge that I'm more than happy to, to take away and range, I can't make it.

But I would like to take it away because it's not something that I've really personally have come across like to raise it with the team to raise it further.

JOHN

So if I can I can I come in as well so because I can I can sort of come in from a, I suppose with my Virgin Media O2 hats on here.

We are also yeah I am aware that there are social tarrifs out there, and they do tend to be based on the Universal Credit, I don't know the, the way the criteria was such as such.

I can only speak for pops up you know from a Virgin Media perspective.

But what I can say is within Greater Manchester what we did do is we convened all the major telcos, and we had a roundtable which the mayor shared, so questions like that were raised and say, What are you doing, and telco industry to address your connectivity

and the you know the rates that are the often that can be seen as a barrier because it's just too expensive even out the sort of 10 to 15 pounds rate that people may be in the social tarrifs could be out there still a still a barrier.

So, we are in regular contact with the telco industry, we are lobbying them to make sure that they are doing better. And that's actually part of why the social housing project is really important because we're doing a bit of a test here this is not being

done anywhere else in the UK, to see what offer can provide a do that is viable for them to do it but also is offering a digital inclusive package of support for individuals and may not be able to you know afford it, or maybe on pension credits or other

things. So that is part of the work we're doing

CHRIS

it said I just took a come in and not to. I know bt for example of just looking at the KT just know, so they doing could pension credit, so it's the guaranteed credit part on the social talus.

So the you know I think colour is john says that all other telecoms, there is pressure being put on people to look at this all the time, and but as I say that there are options out there at the moment, or be just the guarentee say that the moment.

ALEX

And I wonder if I can come in as well.

So, I'm Alex as I mentioned earlier, whatever occurs to me, is that, and on our website. We have a fact sheet called funding for an adapter computer system.

And, yeah, I know a lot of organizations, which are prepared to help with providing hardware, we're talking about providing a computer or an iPad, rather than internet access.

One of the difficulties that we have is that there doesn't seem to really the support in place for a client to get that extra support to put a funding application together.

So I would say to all your organizations.

And if you got clients who might need funding support you. That's great. Can you point them towards us.

But it would be really, really useful.

If you were able to step up, I know everyone's busy but someone needs still within your organization to help people bring up and get a funding application in, and we're talking about clients were whole any literacy, that they would have difficulties putting together a letter

asking for money, and they don't, they know the skills to do it. And I do think sometimes organizations are really keen to pass them on to someone else and go.

You can get funding advice from them, and then they come back and say, right I need help putting it together. and I just wanted to make this really clear because I find it exciting how people tend to get left behind.

SARAH

So I think that's maybe we'll come on to their questions in the q amp a back to those but I think the point you're making Alex is something about simplicity of applications.

I wonder if, Rob, or john or Chris want to say something about things like the data bank, and it's all very well having these schemes in place. All That Is it difficult to access that support.

And if not, how can people specifically get hold of support and for funding for devices and in particular for data, it's maybe Rob we’ll with you on that one.

ROB

Yeah, with regards to the data bank itself, we are inviting all, you know, all, all range of different organizations from charities libraries community organizations.

So as it grows, you know, that we're hoping to have a UK wide coverage there's always going to be pockets of that, that, you know, that potentially aren't being covered but, and if there are particular people that can't find it, then, then

that's the, you know, the more than welcome to contact us.

With regards to devices.

So, there is still an issue with accessing and devices, and I think we've distributed in the region of 22,000 since the start of the pandemic. What we're looking at we're continuing to look to access devices, as much as possible but we're looking at how

can we feed into the circular economy and draw and feed into

organizations or devices that you know aren’t being used, or to get them out to the people that really need it, and there are programs out there and local organizations that are already doing this.

A good place to look. would be the restart project or programme, which supported buying nominee, which on that website it has a list of refurbishment local organizations and they connect with local charities.

So provide devices that way.

And there are other sort of device programs as well.

With regards to the word that Tesco mobile I do with crisis and they're focusing on people who are suffering from homelessness or addiction and things like that.

So there are there are lots of different programs, about I don't know if there's a central place where, where they all are but I think the restart website is a good place to start, especially looking in your locality with regards to get in.

Guess a device or data when it comes to actual application process we want to make it as simple as as possible, which is why we keep it You know, over the age of 18 and people that are in poverty or or struggling so they don't have to jump through hoops to get that they would need to identify an organization that is supporting that but we are looking to support 500,000 people so expecting

a lot of organizations across a lot of different pools of supporting people, and as local as possible to do that.

SARAH

Yeah, and I think just to echo what Alex is saying that is a fact sheet on our website, which has some notice in the chat some people asking for specific links as a fact sheet on there which talks about organizations that will actually help you access,

low, or free devices and I know we've got a couple of blogs that are listed in the slide deck which we will sign post you to some of that information as well.

I guess the other thing that I just flag up and maybe ask the question of all of the panellists, is there, organizations, I think the folks on the data bank is around organizations applying, so if you're an individual or if you're on the webinar today

and you're a carer or know somebody who needs one.

It's probably about connecting them first to a local organization that can then upload to the database. So, I, because that is the route and that's what worked very effectively for digital Lifeline but I guess I just wonder john you're nodding whether

you can say something about how an individual can just hook into some of these initiatives.

JOHN

Absolutely no, it's exactly that point there so it's about that local organization that local community group it could be your local library, it could be whoever

it might be that you're in contact with then it can identify you as somebody who requires that support, and actually on the care leaders program that's exactly what's happening and going to the point that was made about making applications easy, it's

and so it's up. In this case, we've got the council who were that local organization who connected into the online centre, because the council building's themselves, the libraries and the community centre run by the Council our online centre.

So it works really nice and neatly smoothly into that. Okay, I'm the individual will connect into my.

connects them into the, into the data bank.

SARAH

Yes. It's about reaching out locally, and I know Good Things Foundations have got really good local footprint, but also our volunteers, Christine Can you would recommend saying if you contact ability now, and

something that the volunteers would be willing to look at, look for you and see if they can find local community groups and I know that certainly what happened in, where we went to the bank community and Essex, it was a local community group that came

to us and said, we've got the devices we need the support so please do reach out to us as well. And unfortunately I've got one eye on the clock, and we've got three minutes left to go so Kelly Could I ask you to just bring up the final few slides for

me please

Fantastic. So, I'm not intending to read all of these out but I do just want to reiterate because I also see a couple of comments about actionable information which is what I'm sure all the panellists agree this in for this webinar is the focus is on that.

So from our perspective as I said there's a number there for the free helpline and do reach out, Alex and the team are really willing to help signpost to other organizations to our fact sheets where you can find more information on this more free

webinars, including some recordings of past events. I talked about my computer my way. Also, I guess along the lines of what you were saying Rob we do also have CSR opportunities so if you happen to be on the webinar, and your company that's desperate

to give away, either funding or free devices, then do please get in touch with us. And so if you move on from there Kelly.

And also, we offer a variety of training, and so have a look at this slide if that's something that you're interested in and this discount code there.

In terms of blogs, here are some of the things that we've done in the past, in partnership with people like Good Things Foundation. So, if you're a community organization you're thinking about how can we make this happen.

And the same with Rob was saying please do reach out and have a look at some of the work we've done in the past and we'd love to hear from you.

Next slide.

And this is a link to all the all the great regional work that John's doing, and I'm sure equally he'd be very happy to hear from people who want to learn from what they're doing if you really passionate and you want to do something in your own community or

there's information on there about how you can learn the lessons from what they're doing. Next slide, and loads of useful links some Good Things Foundation and yeah so again I'm not going to read all of these out but there's information about the National data bank, and their own learn my way platform which is fantastic if you're looking to learn skills, where to find the online centres, the infographic that Rob talked through earlier, and the blueprint to fix the digital device so that influencing piece

that's important, they're always in there I think about whether you know why is it that certain types of credit. And what do we need to do to make this change happen.

So I think that's the final slide Kelly just check. It is.

We are at time. Once again, a massive thank you to all the panellist and I hope today has been useful for you. And thanks very much so I’ll end the webinar there, thanks everybody and do get in touch as we’ve said. Have a great day.