Digital Inclusion: Evidence Digests

No. 1

Evidence Digests present information on Digital Inclusion trends and outcomes in an easily digestible form. They act as a guide to conversations between those delivering Digital Inclusion projects and those who wish to learn from them where both can share in an understanding of what the evidence tells us, why and how it should be measured. In this issue, we introduce the digests and what they aim to do.

April 2020

Welcome to the Evidence Digests: Understanding Digital Inclusion

Context

'Digital Inclusion is social inclusion in the 21st century that ensures individuals and disadvantaged groups have access to, and skills to use, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and are therefore able to participate in and benefit from today's growing knowledge and information society.'

Washington State University

More so now than ever before and in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, Digital Inclusion needs to be a policy and practice priority across Europe.

'COVID-19 has shone a spotlight on a digital divide and the effects of digital exclusion on low-income communities. Communities are feeling isolated, forgotten about and unable to communicate their expertise and thoughts.'

Joseph Rowntree Foundation April 2020

Eurostat figures from 2019 show that while internet usage has increased in recent years (to an average of 85% of individuals), there remain some countries where this remains at just three-quarters or even less (Eurostat 2020).

What is evidence?

Evidence is a broad term that includes different types of knowledge. While there are different views and hierarchies of knowledge around this, the MEDICI project promotes high quality evidence which distinguishes between projects which are innovative but not evidenced; effective in that there is evidence that the project made a difference; and replicable where projects can say with confidence that they worked, in context and more than once. We need evidence to help make decisions about how best to improve digital inclusion.

MEDICI Mapping Digital Inclusion

Defining Digital Inclusion

According to the European Commission, Digital Inclusion is defined as:

'ways to ensure that everybody can contribute to and benefit from the digital economy and society'. [1]

The European Commission, and most EU Member States, typically shape their Digital Inclusion policy in terms of three key intervention areas:

- Connectivity: access to the internet through broadband, wi-fi and mobile.
- Usage capability: the acquisition of digital competences so people can use digital devices efficiently and effectively.
- Quality of use: the design of services so they meet all user needs, including the needs of people who are vulnerable.

The UK Digital Inclusion Strategy says:

'Digital inclusion, or rather, reducing digital exclusion, is about making sure that people have the capability to use the internet to do things that benefit them day to day'. [2]

Digital Inclusion is clearly linked to EU policy on the 'Digital Single Market', which aims to:

'support an inclusive Digital Single Market in which citizens and businesses

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[1] Communication from The Commission to The European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A Digital Single Market Strategy for Europe. COM/2015/0192 final.
[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy.

What are Evidence Digests?

The MEDICI project has created an online Catalogue and Map of Digital Inclusion projects which will contain publicly available information about the evidence of effectiveness. The Evidence Digests are intended as a companion resource to provide users with a critical analysis of the data in the catalogue and highlight information around particular target groups.

Evidence Digests will:

◗ alert readers to new and interesting topics in the field of Digital Inclusion;
◗ provide opportunities for members of the Digital Inclusion Community to make specific research suggestions;
◗ offer Community members access to information relevant to their interests and jobs;
◗ place interventions in a broader context;
◗ summarise evidence for interventions addressing specific target groups addressed by MEDICI: migrants, disabled people, vulnerable young people and children, older people, and those who are unemployed and facing social problems;
◗ summarise evidence of a particular type of intervention which has been shown to be significant.

In addition to catalogue users, the digests will be of interest to policy makers, academics and social entrepreneurs, in short all the potential members of the Digital Inclusion Community.

Evidence Digests will look across target groups, in countries, across cities and where the innovation and/or the evidence suggest there is a project worth pursuing in the future. We welcome readers' requests for themes to investigate and look forward to presenting the next Digest.

The Digests are a signpost for further reading. They are not a definitive account of what works.

have the necessary skills and can benefit from interlinked and multi-lingual e-services, from e-government, e-justice, e-health, e-energy or e-transport.'

The Catalogue

The **Catalogue** contains at the moment approximately 150 examples of innovative and sometimes evidenced examples of digital inclusion across Europe. It will grow over time and will include new examples developed by members of the MEDICI Knowledge Community. Over 30 of the current projects relate to older people (and a further 30 target older people, among other groups); over 60 are dedicated to marginalised young people and children; and there are projects which target migrants as well as people with disabilities.

The catalogue illustrates the level of innovation that has taken place in promoting Digital Inclusion. It is also concerned with good practice and many projects which demonstrated effectiveness are also highly replicable.

The catalogue is also linked to an interactive map which shows where the practices are distributed across Europe. Users can search for practices according to target group or keywords of interest and view statistics about the cases in the catalogue.

Coming soon!
Evidence Digest 2:
Older people and Digital Inclusion at a time of need.

Find out more:
https://digitalinclusion.eu/