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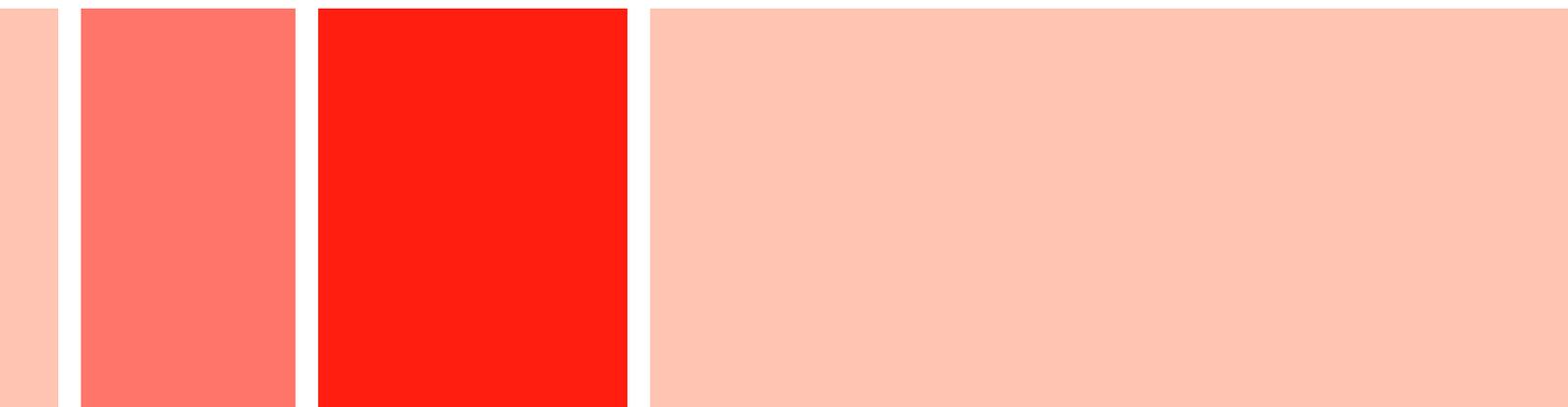
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The Evaluation of Communities 2.0

Final Evaluation Report - Revised*



The Evaluation of Communities 2.0 – Final Evaluation Report*

*Note: 28 July 2015 update overview

This is the final update on the evaluation of Communities 2.0. The update takes into account the final reported outturns. Figures in Tables 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 26 and 27 were also updated to include 2014/15 data.



Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Evaluation Aims and Objectives

Old Bell 3 Ltd. was appointed in 2010 to undertake the long term evaluation of Communities 2.0 by the then Department for Social Justice and Local Government (DSJLG) of the Welsh Government. Communities 2.0 was a Programme¹ which aimed to provide a strategic approach to digital inclusion, working with community and voluntary sector groups and social enterprises and which was funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) from the Convergence Programme for West Wales and the Valleys and by the Welsh Government.

The aim of the evaluation was to identify and measure the impact of Communities 2.0 and its progress in meeting its aims and objectives. The evaluation was intended to focus on the ERDF-funded Programme in West Wales and the Valleys, and although the Programme has subsequently been extended (without European funding) to cover East Wales, the focus of this report is largely on the delivery in the Convergence area.

The evaluation involved three distinct stages. An Initial Process and Scoping Report was published early in 2011² and an Interim Evaluation was published in January 2012³. This third and final report is intended as a summative evaluation of the Programme

The original objectives of this final stage, as set out in the initial Specification, were to:

- 'build on the formative evaluation in stage 1 and review the Programme delivery arrangements to assess their effectiveness in supporting the

¹ We refer to Communities 2.0 throughout this report as a Programme, although from the perspective of the West Wales and the Valleys Convergence Programme it is regarded as a project.

² <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-communities-two-point-zero/?lang=en>

³ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/evaluation-communities-two-point-zero/?lang=en>

achievement or otherwise of the aims and objectives of the Programme;

- build on stage 2 of the evaluation and review output and other quantitative data, and to collect and review qualitative data to identify and measure the Programme's outcomes. This should include a review of progress against expected targets and should give consideration to counterfactuals;
- use available data to draw conclusions on the social and economic impact of the Programme. This should involve a comparison of the 'end-state' against baseline positions to assess the extent of change within the target areas and to compare this with the non-target areas;
- ...assess the additionality of the Programme and the degree to which any changes to which any changes in target variables (such as employment rates or ICT usage) can be attributed to the Programme;
- use the available data to assess...the value for money of the Programme;
- examine the sustainability of projects and activities developed as part of the Programme;
- identify examples of good practice within the Programme;
- undertake a broad review of change in the political, economic and social context of the Programme since its inception and to review how Communities 2.0 has adapted to or influenced this change;
- make recommendations on the need for and any necessary features of any future successful digital inclusion programme'.

It needs to be recognised, however, that the Programme changed significantly during the course of its lifetime and this inevitably affects the extent to which these objectives are now appropriate. In particular, whereas originally the Programme was narrowly targeted on individuals living within the most deprived communities in the West Wales and the Valleys region, which (in theory at least) would have enabled a comparison in trends in internet usage within these areas compared to other parts of Wales, these restrictions were progressively relaxed, with the Programme eventually extending to the whole of Wales.

1.2 Work Programme

This summative evaluation draws on:

- A review of policy and strategy documents published since the Initial Process and Scoping Report was published, as well as data from the National Survey for Wales and literature related to the socio-economic benefits of digital inclusion;
- Performance data provided by the Programme's monitoring officer;
- A survey of individual beneficiaries who received support from the Programme: in total, we interviewed some 571 individuals over the lifetime of the Programme (180 in 2011, 241 in 2013 and 150 in 2014), using a survey questionnaire designed to mirror the questions in the National Survey for Wales. The survey also involved a longitudinal element, with second wave interviews held with some 304 beneficiaries between 12 and 18 months after their first interviews;
- Qualitative case-study interviews with social enterprises and voluntary and community organisations supported by the Programme, again using a longitudinal element: in total, we interviewed 49 organisations, of which nine were ones selected as representing 'good practice', with all but one of these interviewed only once in 2014⁴. Of the other 40, 14 were social enterprises and 26 were other voluntary and community organisations selected at random, with 20 interviewed for the first time in 2011 and 21 for the first time in 2013. We were able to undertake follow up interviews with some 33 of these organisations around 18 months after their first interview;
- Semi-structured face-to-face or skype interviews with 20 key stakeholders⁵ between June and September 2014, most of whom had been interviewed in earlier stages of the research: these included key Welsh Government staff, the Programme's management team at the Wales Co-operative Centre, representatives of each of the delivery partners, and a number of members of the Management Board and

⁴ One had already been interviewed in 2013 as part of the random sample.

⁵ Four were undertaken by telephone and one by Skype. A list is included at Annex 1.

external partners. Stakeholders were also given an opportunity to update the information provided in June 2015;

- Small focus groups with 31 members of staff;
- A web-survey with local stakeholders identified by Communities 2.0 staff: in total, some 50 individuals (of a total possible of 155) responded from a range of organisations including local authorities, Community Voluntary Councils (CVCs), other third sector organisations, housing associations, JobCentre Plus and Communities First;
- Five case-studies of digital initiatives (major projects delivered by partners on a geographical or thematic basis and funded by Communities 2.0): in total, these involved face-to-face interviews with 41 stakeholders as well as informal discussions with a small number of beneficiaries and reviewing relevant documents and data from the telephone surveys.

Further detail is provided in the Technical Appendix.

An initial version of this report was prepared in late 2014 and published in March 2015. While the present version incorporates information about the final out-turns, the recommendations, in particular, need to be read in this light.

1.3 The Structure of this Report

In the remainder of this report we first (Chapter 2), by way of background, provide a very brief overview of the Programme itself (Section 2.1), the policy context in which the Programme operated (Section 2.2), the evidence in respect of digital inclusion in general and internet usage in particular (Section 2.3) and the evidence in respect of the socio-economic benefits of digital inclusion (Section 2.4).

We then turn to our findings (Chapter 3 - 9), drawing on our analysis of monitoring information, our fieldwork interviews and focus groups with those

directly involved with delivering the Programme and with other relevant stakeholders, our web survey with local external stakeholders, our visits to supported organisations, and our telephone interviews with assisted individuals.

We first consider the extent to which the Programme has fitted with changing policy (Chapter 3) before turning briefly to examine internal processes and relationships (Chapter 4). We then report on the performance of the Programme in terms of its formal outputs and budgets (Chapter 5) before considering the evidence on the success or otherwise of the Programme in generating awareness of Communities 2.0 and building wider relationships (Chapter 6) and turning to examine the nature of the support provided and the satisfaction with it (Chapter 7). In Chapter 8 we consider the evidence in relation to outcomes and impacts, in terms of the behaviours of the public and third sector, for organisations and for individuals before (in Chapter 9) considering the views of various stakeholders about the future need for digital inclusion interventions in Wales.

Finally, (Chapter 10) we outline our Conclusions, including on the value for money of the Programme, and put forward a number of recommendations for the future.

2.0 Background

2.1 Communities 2.0: Design and Delivery

Communities 2.0 was the flagship Digital Inclusion Programme of the Welsh Government. It was expected to run for six years from April 2009 to March 2015, subject to a mid-term review which took place in 2012⁶.

Developed by the Digital Inclusion Unit within the Welsh Government, it received an allocation of £8.9 million of ERDF towards total project costs of just under £20 million⁷. The Programme involved both a focus on community and voluntary organisations as a route to promote digital inclusion (with an original headline target of engaging some 20,000 individuals with ICT over the lifetime of the Programme) and an emphasis on working with social enterprises, and, in so doing, generating economic benefits for supported enterprises, communities and individuals.

In terms of spatial coverage, support for social enterprises⁸ was always possible in any part of the Convergence area, while work with community and voluntary organisations and with individuals was originally restricted to the most deprived 30 per cent of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) as identified by the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) 2008. However, this restriction was removed at the start of the second phase of the Programme in April 2012, and at the same time, the Welsh Government was able to identify funding to extend the Programme to North-East Wales and Powys (with activity extended to the remaining areas of Wales from January 2014).

⁶ A fuller explanation of the background to Communities 2.0 and its delivery structure in the first phase is contained in our Scoping Report.

⁷ WEFO revised offer of grant letter, dated 25 August 2010.

⁸ The Business Plan allowed for support to be given to 'enterprises including social enterprises'. In practice, assistance to enterprises was restricted to enterprises with a social purpose, rather than any particular enterprise governance structure, though, in terms of the target for 'new enterprises created', any business was eligible. Henceforward in this report, we use 'social enterprises' as shorthand for the enterprises supported by the Programme.

The second phase also saw a stronger emphasis on work with individual beneficiaries, in particular through the development of 'digital initiatives', large scale projects delivered by partner organisations (local authorities, CVCs, other large third sector organisations and housing associations) on an area-based or thematic basis, which sought to deliver digital inclusion activities directly or indirectly to relevant individuals, particularly from the four broad target groups for the Programme – older people, disabled people, those living in social housing and the unemployed.

The Digital Inclusion Unit held the contract with WEFO and was responsible for ensuring that the Programme was delivered, but delivery of the Programme was contracted out to a consortium led by the Wales Co-operative Centre (WCC) and initially consisting of four other delivery partners, Carmarthenshire County Council, Novas Scarman (later known as People Can), the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services (PAVS) and the University of Glamorgan's George Ewart Evans Centre for Storytelling (GEECS). However, after People Can went into administration in November 2012, staff in that organisation who were working on Communities 2.0 were transferred into WCC.

Communities 2.0 staff included:

- Brokers, who were responsible for identifying and providing support to voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises through the analysis of their needs and (in the case of social enterprises) through so-called 'packages of support' which provided financial support for equipment, website design etc in addition to direct technical support and advice provided by Circuit Riders;
- Circuit Riders who provided technical support to voluntary and community organisations, and to enterprises;
- Outreach workers, using community development techniques (including such approaches as digital storytelling) to promote digital inclusion;
- Management and administrative staff.

In the first phase of the Programme, the delivery partners operated semi-autonomously, with distinct arrangements for the digital inclusion and social enterprise strands of the Programme. However, from the start of the second phase in April 2012, a new delivery structure based around integrated local area teams (delivering support both on digital inclusion and social enterprise), each led by a Broker and drawing in resources from the different delivery partners was put in place. As part of these changes, the Brokers were tasked explicitly with leading on work with stakeholders within their areas on digital initiatives.

In the final year of the Programme, in the context of the opportunity to extend the programme to the whole of Wales and some underspends in the Convergence budget, a new National Campaign was launched, working in partnership with learning providers, notably Further Education Colleges and local authority Adult Education/Lifelong Learning Departments. This was supported by a national advertising campaign, with potential learners being signposted to informal courses run by sessional workers drawn from adult education. These sessional workers were funded and trained by Communities 2.0 and used equipment and training materials developed by the Project.

2.2 Policy Context

2.2.1 Policy Background

Our 2012 evaluation report drew a number of clear messages from the policy review which helped to contextualise the way in which Communities 2.0 evolved during its implementation. The key policy themes identified at that stage included that:

- Digital inclusion was high on the agenda of Government at the Welsh, UK and European levels. The agenda had seemingly been unaffected by the recent economic recession. Indeed there appeared to be a growing case that recent economic turbulence and subsequent austerity measures had

strengthened the case for the digital inclusion agenda, with digital inclusion increasingly being seen as a corollary of moving public service delivery onto digital platforms as a way of achieving savings in public spending. This apparent narrowing of the focus on to a ‘race online’, in contrast to a broader emphasis on digital inclusion as an important component of social inclusion, seemed particularly clear in the UK Government agenda;

- Digital exclusion in Wales was not fundamentally different from other parts of the UK and there was a growing body of evidence about ‘what works’ upon which decision makers might draw. This included the experiences, good practices and wider evidence from the now substantial number of digital inclusion interventions across the UK (and more widely);
- Digital inclusion remained a challenge to policy and decision makers in Wales: whilst good progress had been made since 2008, much work remained to be done to achieve the UK and Welsh Government’s medium term targets.

2.2.2 Recent Policy Developments and Progress in Wales

In March 2011, the Welsh Government published the *Digital Wales: Delivery Plan*⁹. The Plan set out how the Welsh Government intended to achieve the goals outlined in *Delivering a Digital Wales*¹⁰, published in December 2010. Box 1 presents the main themes and goals described by the Plan.

Box 1: Digital Wales: Delivery Plan - Themes and Goals¹¹

Theme 1: Digital Inclusion – An Inclusive, Sustainable and Prosperous Society	
Goal 1:	To work collaboratively to gain a better understanding of digital exclusion.
Goal 2:	To reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst people aged 50 and older
Goal 3:	To reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst residents of social housing
Goal 4:	To reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst unemployed and economically inactive
Goal 5:	To reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst people with disabilities
Goal 6:	To reduce digital exclusion amongst all adults.

⁹ Welsh Government (March 2011) *Digital Wales: Delivery Plan*

¹⁰ Welsh Government (December 2011) *Delivering a Digital Wales – The Welsh Assembly Government’s Outline Framework for Action*

¹¹ Welsh Government (March 2011) *Digital Wales: Delivery Plan*, p3-4

Theme 2: eSkills – Skilled and Competent People	
Goal 7:	To improve the ICT skills of children and young people
Goal 8:	To improve the ICT skills of adults.
Goal 9:	To make the most appropriate use of digital technologies in the delivery of education, training and support for learners.
Theme 3: Competitiveness – A Thriving and Competitive Digital Economy	
Goal 10:	To support and develop a competitive ICT sector
Goal 11:	To support and develop a vibrant creative sector
Goal 12:	To support sustained investment in research & development in high value-added ICT based products and services
Goal 13:	To ensure that all businesses fully adopt and exploit ICT to achieve and maintain a competitive advantage
Goal 14:	To increase the availability and uptake of useful and useable digital public services
Goal 15:	To design and implement appropriate, secure digital platforms which enable public services to be delivered online
Goal 16:	To improve the efficiency of ICT services by reducing the procurement, purchase, carbon footprint and ownership/support costs of ICT equipment and services across the public sector
Goal 17:	To deliver improvements in the delivery of public services through the innovative use of digital technologies
Theme 4: A First Class Digital Infrastructure	
Goal 18:	To ensure everyone has access to a basic level of broadband
Goal 19:	To ensure everyone has access to next generation broadband
Goal 20:	To improve mobile phone coverage across Wales
Goal 21:	To improve digital radio (DAB) coverage across Wales

In 2014 the Welsh Government published a *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan Update*¹² refreshing its approach to addressing digital inclusion and setting out its aims to further reduce digital exclusion levels for Welsh adults.

The *Update* re-iterated the Welsh Government's commitment to digital inclusion as 'a vital part of our overall aim to tackle poverty', noting in this respect that the *Tackling Poverty Action Plan*, published in 2013 also contained a commitment to a series of digital inclusion targets¹³.

¹² Welsh Government (June 2014) *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan – Update 2014 The strategic approach to digital inclusion*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9

The *Update* presented information on the multipronged approach to digital inclusion taken by the Welsh Government since 2011 in partnership with public, private and third sector organisations. Progress reported in the *Update* included:

- Key initiatives/interventions – in particular Communities 2.0 which, it noted, had been rolled out to all parts of Wales;
- Improving access to the internet via libraries (e.g. to support internet access in response to the UK Government’s Welfare Reform agenda);
- Engaging the third sector as key partners in delivering our digital inclusion objectives;
- Supporting improvements in ICT infrastructure (in particular working in partnership with BT to deliver superfast fibre broadband in Wales via the Superfast Cymru (SFC) Programme);
- Supporting moves – such as ‘Rural Payments online’ - to increase public services and information available online (fulfilling the commitments of the Welsh Government’s *ICT Strategy for the Public Sector in Wales*¹⁴);
- Encouraging digital inclusion through education systems (Hwb and Hwb+ online learning Programmes supporting teachers and pupils);
- e-Safety (e.g. e-Safety education and awareness raising Programme (2014-15));
- Integrating digital inclusion to the Welsh tackling poverty and financial inclusion agenda.

While accepting the inevitable caveats around attribution, the findings presented within the *2014 Update* based on key survey data (e.g. *National Survey for Wales*¹⁵) hint at the considerable success of these interventions (see Section 2.3).

As well as setting revised targets for reducing digital exclusion for different sections of the population (see Section 2.3), the *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan Update* also set a number of broader qualitative targets, namely to:

¹⁴ Welsh Government (2011) *ICT Strategy for the Public Sector in Wales*

¹⁵ *National Survey of Wales* 2010 pilot survey and further surveys completed for January-March 2012, 2012/13 and 2013/14

- Provide free inclusive access to ICT and the internet for all four priority groups¹⁶.
- Develop ICT skills through informal and formal learning including information literacy (the ability to analyse and evaluate online materials) to all four priority groups.
- Build alliances of stakeholders across the private, public and third sectors.
- Align policy areas across the Welsh Government and Welsh public sector.
- Build relationships with private sector organisations to support the digital inclusion agenda.
- Build third sector alliances to support the digital inclusion agenda.
- Build a volunteering base to support digital inclusion activities.
- Develop the ICT skills of the museum, library and archive workforce to enable them to support learners.
- Advocate and broker digital inclusion initiatives to operate outside the geographical areas currently in receipt of support funding.
- Develop bilingual content to promote engagement with ICT.
- Maintain a close and collaborative relationship with UK Government and UK wide initiatives in support of the delivery of the digital inclusion agenda in Wales.
- Obtain robust data and research on digital exclusion in Wales for policy formation, benchmarking and evaluation.

2.2.3 UK Policy Developments

The 2014 Update¹⁷ also committed the Welsh Government to maximising the value to Wales of the UK / national digital inclusion activities and initiatives. These initiatives related to both existing policy (covered in previous reports) and more recent policy developments discussed below.

¹⁶ i.e. older people, those living in social housing, those with disabilities and the unemployed and economically inactive.

¹⁷ Welsh Government (June 2014) *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan – Update 2014 The strategic approach to digital inclusion*

In September 2012 the Secretary of State for the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS)¹⁸ set out the UK Government's industrial strategy which outlined the Department's vision for the future of the economy and committed the Government to a long-term, strategic partnership with industry.

Within this vision, the 'Information Economy' was identified as one of 11 sectors targeted by the UK Government to establish a growth partnership between government and industry.

Following a consultation the Information Economy Strategy was published in June 2013. The strategy set out a vision for a thriving UK information economy that would enhance national competitiveness through for instance:

- 'Citizens with the capability and confidence to make the most of the digital age and benefiting from excellent digital services' (proposals included a new team based in the Government Digital Service to lead and coordinate digital inclusion initiatives including those aligned to the work of the Go ON UK digital skills alliance¹⁹);
- The digital infrastructure (both physical and regulatory) and the framework for cyber security and privacy necessary to support growth, innovation and excellence. (e.g. options for how those in hard-to-reach areas can access superfast broadband)²⁰;
- 'A strong, innovative, information economy sector exporting UK excellence to the world'.

While broader economic and industrial strategy is one driver of the UK Government's thinking on digital inclusion, the financial pressures on public service delivery is another.

In this context, the UK Government published in November 2012 a *Government Digital Strategy* for services provided by central government

¹⁸ The Right Honourable Vince Cable MP

¹⁹ Go ON UK digital skills alliance is the successor Programme to Race Online 2012 and aims to increase digital skills and reduce digital exclusion across the UK. Again led by Baroness Lane Fox, Go ON UK operates under charitable status as a partnership of key private and publicly funded organisations.

²⁰ HM Government (June 2013) *Information Economy Strategy*, p7

departments and associated agencies and arm's length bodies²¹. This presented 14 'actions' these services needed to take to become 'digital by default', meaning 'digital services which are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use digital services will choose to do so, while those who can't are not excluded'²².

A further two actions were added in the refreshed Government Digital Strategy (2013)²³. In December 2013 the UK Government published a more detailed policy paper **Action 15: Collaborate with partners across public, private and voluntary sectors to help people go online**. This outlined a number of actions, including the need for government departments and agencies to:

- 'appoint a senior digital inclusion lead accountable to their departmental digital leader where it has been agreed with Government Digital Service (GDS) that this is relevant to their business';
- 'agree the resourcing they will provide to the cross-government digital inclusion team based in GDS, which will collaborate with partners across public, private and voluntary sectors';
- 'build digital inclusion into policy making and use government digital and assisted digital services to help people go online';
- 'evaluate, monitor and share what works';
- 'work with departments and partners to agree our approach to digital inclusion and publish a digital inclusion strategy in spring 2014'²⁴

The *UK Digital Inclusion Strategy* was subsequently published in July 2014²⁵. The strategy put forward a comprehensive approach to achieving digital inclusion, incorporating a focus both on citizens and organisations. Indeed, the strategy identified that many of the challenges faced by SMEs and third sector

²¹ UK Cabinet Office (November 2012) Government Digital Strategy

²² *ibid*, p5

²³ UK Cabinet Office (10 December 2013) Policy paper - *Government Digital Strategy: Updated*

²⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-strategy-action-15/action-15-collaborate-with-partners-across-public-private-and-voluntary-sectors-to-help-people-go-online>

²⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy>

organisations were broadly comparable to those faced by individuals, including motivation, not having the right skills and capabilities and - as Lloyds Bank have found in their research on businesses and the internet²⁶ - ‘an urgent need for a deeper understanding of the “art of the possible” in the digital domain’.

The report made clear that much had been achieved through a plethora of interventions, projects and activities across the public, private and third sectors (and often via cross sector partnerships), including interventions focused on improving:

- *Access*: e.g. UK Government sponsored *Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) Programme*²⁷ and *Digital Deal*, a matched funding initiative that seeks to encourage and stimulate social housing providers to undertake digital development work with their residents in order to generate savings and efficiencies in the future²⁸;
- *Engagement*: e.g. in the private sector, BT’s *Get IT Together* campaign and *Citizens Online*, a national charity established to tackle digital exclusion amongst individuals and communities;
- *Skills*: e.g. *the Go ON UK Programme*,²⁹ the UK’s Digital Skills Alliance and successor programme to *Raceonline 2012*.

In terms of forward looking actions the Strategy committed the UK Government to reducing digital exclusion (*‘people lacking basic digital capability’*) to nine per cent of the adult population by 2020 (and to 16 per cent and 12 per cent by 2016 and 2018, respectively), while acknowledging that since some people would never wish to access the internet, achieving better digital inclusion rates would become more difficult.

The strategy also referenced the principles (or checklist) which would underpin the UK Government’s approach to digital inclusion (presented in Box 2).

²⁶ Lloyds Bank *UK Business Digital Index 2014*

²⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/broadband-delivery-uk>

²⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181659/DigitalDealProspectus.pdf

²⁹ <http://www.go-on.co.uk/>

Box 2: Digital Inclusion Checklist³⁰

1. 'Start with user needs – not our own: Tailor support around the unique barriers that stop people going online, and adapt to people's needs which change over time.'
2. 'Improve access – stop making things difficult: Provide simple, low cost options for those who are socially and economically excluded to get online'
3. 'Motivate people – find something they care about: Bring digital into people's lives in a way that benefits them; helping them do things they care about and can only do online'
4. Keep it safe – build trust: Make it easier to stay safe online by providing simple and straightforward advice and tools
5. Work with others – don't do it alone: Work together to maximise expertise, experience and resources to better meet user needs
6. Focus on wider outcomes – measure performance: Identify wider outcomes that can be delivered by helping people become independently confident online and use data to understand what works.

2.3 Access to and Use of the Internet in Wales: Targets and Progress

2.3.1 Headline Data

The *National Survey for Wales* tracks data on internet access, usage and digital inclusion³¹. Table 1 presents information on household access to the internet. The table shows steadily improving access since early 2012. This represents continuation of the trend tracked by the Living in Wales survey up to 2008, for instance, the 2008 Living in Wales survey estimated that 60 per cent of households had access to the internet at home, suggesting a sizeable overall increase since over the last six years³².

³⁰ <https://gds.blog.gov.uk/2014/01/13/a-checklist-for-digital-inclusion-if-we-do-these-things-were-doing-digital-inclusion/>

³¹ Though piloted in 2009/10 changes in categories of the data collected mean that direct comparison between the latest data (2014/15) and the findings of the pilot period 2009/10 are not always possible)

³² Living in Wales Survey, 2008 (published in 2009), p36

Table 1: Household internet access

	Percentage(%)			
	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Households with internet access at home				
(Wales):				
National Survey for Wales ³³ (aged 18+)	70	73	75	78%
Ofcom ³⁴ survey (aged 16+)	68	75	80	N/A
Households with internet access at home				
(UK):				
Ofcom survey (aged 16+) ³⁵	79	80	82	N/A
ONS Omnibus Survey ³⁶	80	83	84	N/A

Sources: Various

Table 1 also presents information on household access to the internet across the UK as a whole. Although differences in definitions limit direct comparisons between the National Survey for Wales data and UK wide survey, it is notable that while the improving performance in Wales reflects increasing access to the internet across the UK, the gap between Wales and England appears to have narrowed considerably over recent years.

Ofcom in its regular reports *The Communications Market* presents findings from their annual statistical survey relating to developments in the communications sector. These reports show that 80 per cent of households in Wales had access to the internet in the first quarter of 2014 (January – March), a five percentage point increase since the same period in 2013.

The Ofcom data for the last three years (which is based on people aged 16 years and above) also reveals progress made in Wales relative to the whole of the UK in securing internet access. The Ofcom survey estimated that 3 per

³³ National Survey for Wales, 2010 (pilot) (data presented in *National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012*); *January - March 2012*; *2012-13 and 2013-14*

³⁴ Ofcom *Communication Market reports 2012*; *2013*; *2014*

³⁵ http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/cmr/cmr14/2014_UK_CMV.pdf

³⁶ The ONS Omnibus Survey 2011 Statistical Bulletin: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-access--households-and-individuals/2011/stb-internet-access-2011.html>. The Oxford Internet Survey (OxIS) 2011 has reported similar proportions of UK households having internet access (e.g. 79 per cent in 2011).

cent more UK households had internet access in 2014 than 2012. The increase in Wales as measured by Ofcom over this period was 12 per cent, representing a significant narrowing of the gap between Wales and the UK as a whole.

National Survey for Wales Survey data also shows that 'adults having access to the internet at home' increased by 13 per cent of the population between 2009/10 (69 per cent) and 2013/14 (82 per cent)³⁷. By comparison The Living in Wales Survey stated that only 61 per cent of adults had access to the internet at home in 2007 (suggesting an increase of 21 per cent in the proportion of the adult population having access to the internet between 2007 and 2013/14)³⁸.

However, in the 2012/13 and 2013/14 National Surveys for Wales household internet access for the '20 per cent most deprived' areas of Wales was unchanged at 67 per cent. Household internet access in the '20 per cent least deprived' increased however from 81 per cent to 85 per cent.

Internet usage has also increased amongst adults in Wales since 2011/12. Table 2 presents details of internet usage as a percentage of the adult population. The table shows that compared to 2011/12 around 8 per cent more of the adult population is now using the internet (with increases in both male and female usage percentages). Notably the Living Wales 2007 survey estimated the number of people using the internet at that time to be 61 per cent of the adult population³⁹.

'At home' remains the most popular place for using the internet, though there have been notable increases in usage in 'public places', including libraries: a fifth of respondents who used the internet in 2013/14 reported that they did so in such places, compared to only 6 per cent in 2009/10.

³⁷ 77 per cent of the adult population in January to March 2012; 79 per cent in 2012/13

³⁸ *Living in Wales Survey 2007*

³⁹ *ibid*

Table 2: Percentage of adults in Wales reporting they currently use the internet

	Percentage(%)				
	2009/10 ⁴⁰	2011/12 ⁴¹	2012/13 ⁴²	2013/14 ⁴³	2014/15 ⁴⁴
All	66	73	76	79	81%
Gender:					
Male	n/a	76	79	82	83
Female	n/a	71	73	76	79
Location (used last 3 months):					
At home	92	92	93	96	N/A
Work (other than home)	23	38	37	39	N/A
Another person's home	10	25	26	26	N/A
Public place (e.g. library, internet café)	6	14	18	20	N/A
Place of education	5	9	10	9	N/A

Sources: Various

In terms of devices used to access the internet, there has been a reduction in the use of desktop computer (57 per cent of adult population in Wales in 2012 to 38 per cent in 2014/15); a slight reduction in the use of laptops (74 per cent to 66 per cent) and a sizeable increase in the use of mobile phones (34 per cent in 2012 to 66 per cent in 2014/15) and – to an even greater extent – tablets and other hand-held devices (17% in 2012 to 33% in 2013/14, trends unsurprisingly mirrored across the UK^{45 46}.

In terms of internet use, the Ofcom survey (2014) found that 91 per cent of internet users in Wales (aged 16+) use the internet for general browsing and surfing. Sending and receiving email (84 per cent) is the most popular type of specific use of the internet. Purchasing goods and services online is the

⁴⁰ *National Survey for Wales 2009/10 pilot*

⁴¹ *National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012*

⁴² *National Survey for Wales, 2012-13, Digital inclusion*

⁴³ *National Survey for Wales, 2013-14, Digital inclusion*

⁴⁴ *National Survey for Wales, 2014-15 Headline Results*: Location of use question was not included in the 2014/15 Survey.

⁴⁵ The data does not support analysis over the same timescales for other means of accessing the internet (e.g. tablets, digital TV, games consoles) as the National Survey for Wales revised its categories in 2012/13.

⁴⁶ *Ofcom Communication Market reports 2012; 2013; 2014*

second most popular specific use of the internet (71 per cent), increasing by nine percentage points in Wales in the past year.

The data from the National Survey for Wales 2013/14 shows that 16 of 22 counties in Wales have internet usage between 77 per cent and 82 per cent inclusive. A disproportionate number of counties in the South Wales Valleys fall below this range. Blaenau Gwent has the lowest usage (69 per cent - lower by 7 per cent than the second lowest Merthyr) and Cardiff the highest (85 per cent – 3 per cent higher than next highest Vale of Glamorgan).

In terms of reasons why people do not use the internet, 'interest' (e.g. 'not interested in the internet', 'don't need it', 'wouldn't use it') is cited most often⁴⁷, with 91% of non-users taking part in a recent more detailed follow up survey of respondents to the 2013/14 National Survey citing lack of interest or need as a reason for not accessing the internet: indeed, 56% of these non-users said nothing would encourage or help them to get online in the future⁴⁸. Data from this survey and from the National Survey itself show that lack of skills is also a key factor, with 55 per cent of non-users suggesting that this was a barrier. By contrast, as at the UK level Ofcom found cost and ownership to be more important than 'knowledge'.

Overall, the aim of the Welsh Government's Digital Inclusion Delivery plan was to reduce digital exclusion among all adults aged 18 and over in Wales to 30 per cent by 2012 and 25 per cent by 2015⁴⁹. Given that the 2015 target has already been achieved (24 per cent excluded according to the 2012/13 Survey) the *Delivery Plan Update (2014)*⁵⁰ has included refreshed targets to reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst adults in Wales to 18 per cent by 2015 and 13 per cent by 2017.

⁴⁷ National Survey for Wales 2013/14, Ofcom Communication report 2014, p278

⁴⁸ *National Survey for Wales 2013/14 Digital Inclusion re-contact survey*, Welsh Government 2015

⁴⁹ Welsh Government (March 2011) *Digital Wales: Delivery Plan*

⁵⁰ Welsh Government (June 2014) *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan – Update 2014 The strategic approach to digital inclusion*

The 2014 Update⁵¹ confirmed that specific social groups – notably older and disabled people; those who live in social housing; those on lower incomes; the unemployed and economically inactive – remained particularly prone to digital exclusion. Meanwhile, the Digital Inclusion 2012-13 report⁵² identified two digitally excluded groups to target: the over 65's, particularly those who live in social rented housing, and those who are unemployed or with a limiting illness. We now turn to consider the survey data associated with digital exclusion in these groups.

2.3.2 Older People

The National Survey for Wales report 2014/15 stated that age was the key indicator for digital exclusion, with access to, and use of, the internet declining significantly with age.

The Welsh Government target⁵³ had already committed to reducing levels of digital exclusion amongst people aged 50 and older, from 49 per cent (515,000) in 2010 to 45 per cent (473,000) by 2012 and 40 per cent (421,000) by 2015. The 2014 Update⁵⁴ stated that the original 2015 target had already been achieved (38% by May 2014). A more challenging target was set to reduce levels to 35% by 2015, which again has been achieved.

Table 3 presents the data from the National Survey for Wales on people with access to the internet at home by age. The data confirms the inverse relationship between age and internet access. Despite this Table 3 suggests relatively strong growth in recent years in the percentage of older people accessing the internet with the rate of growth outstripping that of young people.

⁵¹ Welsh Government (June 2014) *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan – Update 2014 The strategic approach to digital inclusion*

⁵² Welsh Government (May 2014) *National Survey for Wales, 2012-13 Digital inclusion* prepared by Dr Adam Whitworth, Luke Temple and Dr Bethan Thomas Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

⁵³ Welsh Government (March 2011) *Digital Wales: Delivery Plan*, p7

⁵⁴ Welsh Government (June 2014) *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan – Update 2014 The strategic approach to digital inclusion*, p12

These findings are reflected across the UK. Ofcom (2014) for instance found that 94 per cent of those aged between 16 and 24 had access to the internet, while only 32 per cent of those aged 75 and over had access. However, internet take-up among this latter age group rose five percentage points across the UK between 2012 and 2014, the largest rise of any age group⁵⁵.

Table 3: Households with access to the internet, by age

	Percentage(%)		
	2011/12 ⁵⁶	2012/13 ⁵⁷	2013/14 ⁵⁸
All age groups (18+) with internet access at home (Wales)	70	73	75
Internet access at home by age (Wales):			
18-24	91	90	91
25-44	90	91	93
45-64	84	86	88
65 and over	49		
65 – 74		66	69
Over 75		31	38

Sources: Various

Turning to usage, the Living in Wales Survey (2007) and National Survey for Wales data (2009/10 pilot to 2013/14) on internet usage by age is presented in Table 4. The findings broadly mirror those relating to internet access, with good levels of growth in the use of the internet within all age groups including the over 65s, though the level of growth for those of retirement age is broadly the same as the average growth for all age groups. Table 4 also confirms that the Welsh Government target for internet use for 2015 had already been surpassed by 2014.

⁵⁵ Note: care should be taking in direct comparison between the findings of National Survey for Wales and Ofcom (or other surveys) due to differences in the questions asked.

⁵⁶ *National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012*. Report presents data on those aged 65 and over. This category was delineated in 2012/13 to those aged 65-74 and those aged 75 and over.

⁵⁷ Welsh Government (May 2014) *National Survey for Wales, 2012-13*

⁵⁸ *National Survey for Wales, 2013-14*

Table 4: Percentage of adults in Wales by age reporting they currently use the internet

	Percentage(%)					
	2007 ⁵⁹	2009/10 ⁶⁰	2011/12 ⁶¹	2012/13 ⁶²	2013/14 ⁶³	2014/15 ⁶⁴
<i>All age groups (18+)</i>	61	N/A	73	76	79	81
<i>Age:</i>						
18-24	88	87	95	96	97	99
25-44	80	87	92	95	95	96
45-64	65	75	76	79	83	85
65 and over	24	37	37	39	44	-
65-74	-	-	-	-	-	63
75 and over	-	-	-	-	-	29

Sources: Various

The 2013/14 Digital Inclusion Report found that while digital disengagement was linked to cost in the case of younger age groups, for older age groups it was related far more to personal choice, that is, 66 per cent of those aged 65 and over who did not use the internet said they ‘don’t want to’ and 43 per cent in the same age group said they ‘don’t need to’ (comparable rates for the 18-24 age groups were found to be 40 per cent and 32 per cent respectively).

Data from Ofcom also confirms that older people are slower in adapting to new digital technologies for accessing the internet. For instance, 74 per cent of internet users aged 55 and over use a desk top or laptop to access the internet compared to only 60 per cent of those aged 35-54 and only 41 per cent of those aged 16 to 34⁶⁵.

Table 5 presents data on the percentage of people within different age groups accessing government and public service web sites in the last 12 months. The table again shows improvements across the age groups in recent years,

⁵⁹ *Living in Wales Survey 2007*

⁶⁰ *National Survey for Wales 2009/10 pilot*

⁶¹ *National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012*

⁶² *National Survey for Wales, 2012-13, Digital inclusion* Dr Adam Whitworth, Luke Temple and Dr Bethan Thomas, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

⁶³ *National Survey for Wales, 2013-14*

⁶⁴ *National Survey for Wales, 2014-15 Headline Results*

⁶⁵ http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/cmr/cmr14/Wales_4.pdf (page 78)

perhaps more so in relative terms for those of retirement age, though overall, the proportion of older people (65-74 and in particular 75s and over) accessing government and public service websites is still notably lower than for the younger age groups.

Table 5: Percentage visiting government and public service web sites (visited last 12months) by age

	Percentage(%)		
	2011/12 ⁶⁶	2012/13 ⁶⁷	2013/14 ⁶⁸
<i>All age groups (18+)</i>	79	81	83
<i>Age:</i>			
18-24	76	86	85
25-44	87	86	88
45-64	78	81	83
65-74		67	73
75 and Over	63	53	57

Sources: Various

Against this positive backdrop the Welsh Government has set new targets for digital exclusion (i.e. internet use) amongst older people, in particular to:

- Reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst people aged 50 and older, from 38 per cent in May 2014 to 35 per cent by 2015 and 30 per cent by 2017;
- Reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst people aged 50-64 from 20 per cent in May 2014 to 16 per cent by 2015 and 12 per cent by 2017;
- Reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst people aged 65-74 from 40 per cent in May 2014 to 36 per cent by 2015 and 32 per cent by 2017;
- Reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst people aged 75 plus from 78 per cent in May 2014 to 70 per cent by 2015 and 60 per cent by 2017.

⁶⁶ *National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012*

⁶⁷ *National Survey for Wales, 2012-13, Digital inclusion*, Dr Adam Whitworth, Luke Temple and Dr Bethan Thomas, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

⁶⁸ *National Survey for Wales, 2013-14*

2.3.3 Social Housing

The 2011 Digital Wales Delivery Plan set a target of reducing digital exclusion amongst residents of social housing from 41 per cent (155,000) in 2010 to 35 per cent (132,000) by 2012 and to 30 per cent (113,000) by 2015⁶⁹.

Table 6 presents data from the National Survey for Wales on access to the internet across three types of tenure. The findings suggest a continuing significant gap in terms of internet access between households in social housing and other forms of tenure, though all tenure groups have increased internet access since 2011/12. National Survey for Wales data also shows internet access from local authority housing is lower than that from housing association tenure.

Table 6: Households with access to the internet, by tenure

	Percentage (%)		
Internet access in Wales by tenure:	2011/12⁷⁰	2012/13⁷¹	2013/14⁷²
Private rented	77	75	81
Owner Occupied	73	76	79
Social Housing	52	54	56
<i>Internet access at home (all groups, Wales)</i>	70	73	75

Sources: Various

Moreover, the National Survey for Wales Pilot survey found that 50 per cent of social households had access to the internet in 2009/10, suggesting an increase in those having access to the internet from social housing of six per centage points over the last four years⁷³.

⁶⁹ Welsh Government (March 2011) *Digital Wales: Delivery Plan*, p7

⁷⁰ *National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012*

⁷¹ *Digital inclusion National Survey for Wales, 2012-13*

⁷¹ *Digital inclusion National Survey for Wales, 2012-13, 2013-14*, Digital inclusion National Survey for Wales, 2012-13

⁷² *National Survey for Wales, 2013-14*

⁷³ *National Survey for Wales, 2010 (pilot)* (data presented in National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012)

National Survey for Wales data on the use of the internet analysed by tenure is limited to 2012-13 and 2013-14. The data shows modest increases for private rented (87 per cent to 89 per cent) and Owner Occupied (77 per cent to 80 per cent) households, while a larger increase (61 per cent to 66 per cent) for social housing⁷⁴: initial data from the 2014-15 National Survey suggest that this has increased further to 69%⁷⁵. Across all households in Wales, usage increased by three per centage points (76 per cent to 79 per cent) in the two years to 2013-14.

Similarly there is tentative evidence of increases in the number of people living in social housing that are visiting government and public service web sites. The National Survey for Wales data suggests an increase between 2011/12⁷⁶ and 2012/13⁷⁷ of six per centage points (68 per cent to 74 per cent) compared to the average increase for all tenure groups of two per centage points (79 per cent to 81 per cent).

The 2014 Update recognises that progress against the 2011 target while positive has been slower than expected. The Welsh Government has responded by setting new targets, specifically to reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst residents of social housing from 34 per cent in May 2014 to 28 per cent by 2015 and 22 per cent by 2017.

2.3.4 Unemployed and Economically Inactive

The Digital Delivery Plan (2011) set out the Welsh Government's targets for reducing digital exclusion amongst the employed, unemployed and economically inactive, namely to:

⁷⁴ No data on usage by tenure is available from the 2012 survey or earlier Living in Wales survey.

⁷⁵ Data provided by Welsh Government drawing on as yet unpublished National Survey data

⁷⁶ *National Survey for Wales, January - March 2012*

⁷⁷ *National Survey for Wales, 2012-13, Digital inclusion*, Dr Adam Whitworth, Luke Temple and Dr Bethan Thomas, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

- Reduce digital exclusion amongst the employed from 12 per cent (120,000⁷⁸) in 2010 to 10 per cent (100,000) by 2012 and to eight per cent (80,000) by 2015;
- Reduce digital exclusion amongst the unemployed from 27 per cent (45,000) in 2010 to 24 per cent (40,000) by 2012 and to 20 per cent (33,000) by 2015;
- Reduce digital exclusion amongst the economically inactive from 49 per cent (500,000) in 2010 to 45 per cent (460,000) by 2012 and to 40 per cent (408,000) by 2015.

No National Survey for Wales data is available on access to the internet for those in employment/not in employment.

However, progress against the usage target has been good, with the 2015 targets already met, mostly by a good margin. The 2014 Update⁷⁹ reveals that as of May 2014:

- Only seven per cent of people in employment (18+) were digitally excluded;
- Only 10 per cent of unemployed people (aged 18+) were digitally excluded;
- Only 20 per cent of working age economically inactive people (18+) were digitally excluded.

Data on internet use by people in Wales ‘in employment’ and ‘not in employment’ in the National Survey - presented in Table 7 – is not comparable with these figures because those ‘not in employment’ include those who are no longer of working age. However, these data also show an improvement between 2012/13 and 2013/2014 for those not in employment. Table 7 also suggests some recent improvements in the percentages of people in employment and those not in employment accessing government and public service web sites.

⁷⁸ All numbers in this section refer to individuals, not households

⁷⁹ Welsh Government (June 2014) *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan – Update 2014 The strategic approach to digital inclusion*

Table 7: Percentage of adults in Wales by employment status reporting they currently use the internet

	Percentage(%)	
	2012/13	2013/14
Employment status (18+):		
In employment	91	93
Not in employment	58	62
Visited Government and public service web sites (visited last 12 months, by employment, 18+):		
All	81	83
In employment	85	88
Not in employment	74	76

Source: National Survey for Wales, 2012/13 and 2013/14

With the 2015 targets already achieved the Welsh Government has set more challenging targets to 2017, specifically to reduce digital exclusion amongst:

- Employed people (aged 18+) from seven per cent in May 2014 to five per cent in 2015 and two per cent in 2017;
- Unemployed people (aged 18+) from 10 per cent in May 2014 to seven per cent by 2015 and four per cent by 2017;
- Working age economically inactive people (aged 18 to 64) from 20 per cent in May 2014 to 16 per cent in 2015 and 12 per cent by 2017.

Initial data from the National Survey for Wales 2014-2015 suggest that as many as 95% of the unemployed and 82% of the working age economically inactive were internet users, suggesting the revised targets are well within reach⁸⁰.

2.3.5 Disabled/Long term illness

The Welsh Government committed in 2011 to reducing digital exclusion amongst those with disabilities.

⁸⁰ Data provided by Welsh Government drawing on as yet unpublished National Survey data

Table 8 shows that in the last two years there has been only a very modest increase in the percentage of people with disabilities/long term illnesses using the internet, with the gap between this group and those without disabilities widening. However, other data (not shown) suggests that there has been an increase in both groups in terms of those visiting government and public service web-sites⁸¹.

Table 8: Percentage of adults in Wales by disability status reporting they currently use the internet

	Percentage(%)	
	2012/13 ⁸²	2013/14
<i>All (18+)</i>	76	79
Disability and health:		
People with disabilities or long term illness	58	60
People without disabilities or long term illness	83	86

Source: Various

The revised target presented in the Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan – Update 2014 is to reduce levels of digital exclusion amongst people with disabilities/long term-limiting illness from 40 per cent in May 2014 to 35 per cent by 2015 and 30 per cent by 2017. Initial data from the National Survey for Wales 2014-2015 suggest that 38% of disabled people (limiting long-standing illness, disability or infirmity) aged 18 and over were not internet users.

2.3.6 Conclusions on Access and Use

Overall, then the data on access to, and use of the internet in Wales suggests significant progress and a narrowing of the gap between Wales and the UK as a whole, and some notable successes in terms of specific target groups within the population, though with less progress in terms of those with disabilities and those living in social housing.

⁸¹ *National survey for Wales data 2012/13 and 2013/14.*

⁸² *National Survey for Wales, 2012-13, Digital inclusion*, Dr Adam Whitworth, Luke Temple and Dr Bethan Thomas, Department of Geography, University of Sheffield

Of course not all of these positive changes can be attributed to the interventions (principally Communities 2.0) of the Welsh Government. Societal changes have and will continue play a role in the mainstream adoption of internet usage as a norm. Moreover – as the *Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan Update* identifies - ‘market forces’ e.g. efficiency and necessity of online functions and cheaper and more user friendly technology – will also drive digital inclusion.

However, motivation, skills and affordability remain key barriers. As the Update rightly identified, technological progress itself threatens to widen the digital divide between the active users who can increasingly exploit ever improving technologies, and those that continue to struggle to overcome the barriers to getting online. In other words the digitally excluded are in danger of being left behind, and indeed with the move to putting more public services, information and function online the risk continues that a great many people that need to use the internet are the very people not currently digitally engaged.

2.4 The Economic Benefits of Digital Inclusion

Perusal of the main research reveals the patchy nature of the available evidence on the economic benefits of digital inclusion.

PricewaterhouseCoopers (2009) drawing on available research findings conclude that:

- ‘Households off-line miss out on savings of £560 per year from shopping and paying bills online. For 3.6 million low income households this is equivalent to savings of over £1 billion a year being lost from shopping and paying bills online’⁸³;
- Children’s educational performance can be improved by home access to a computer and the internet. 1.6 million children in families who do not use

⁸³ Drawing on a by 2008 SQW Consulting report to the Post Office, *Broadband in the Home: An Analysis of the Financial Costs and Benefits*.

the internet to go online at home could boost their total lifetime earnings by £10 billion;

- People with good ICT skills earn between 3-10 per cent more than people without such skills⁸⁴;
- Each contact made by the public with a service deliverer, and each transaction they conduct online which was previously not done online could save the service provider between £3 and £12 per transaction.

However, Bradshaw (2011) challenges these findings and casts doubt on the robustness of the assertions generated from the original research.⁸⁵

Bradshaw also presents a set of methodological principles upon which comprehensive cost-benefit calculation might be generated. For example, using a segmented approach to understand the costs and benefits of digital inclusion to different socio-economic groups, that is, delineating into different groupings of society, and from there comparing the costs of digital access and usage with:

- Benefits foregone to the citizen: The amount of money that each group member misses out on as a consequence of conducting activities in person rather than online;
- Benefits foregone to the government: The amount of money that government organisations dealing with citizens in each group could potentially save as a consequence of reaching the members of each group online rather than in person;
- Benefits foregone to the economy: Refers to losses in national output as a consequence of each of these groups not improving their overall condition as a consequence of not using online services.

⁸⁴ Though it is important to bear in mind that the premium for ICT skills may well have altered significantly over the five years since this report was compiled, given changes in the labour market and the introduction through Universal Job Match of a requirement on job-seekers to use the internet as part of the benefits regime..

⁸⁵ Bradshaw (2011) *Digital Inclusion: Economic and social benefits for individuals and wider society*, Welsh Government GSR Paper 26/2011

UK Online Centres (2008) states that quantifying the potential benefits of digital inclusion in monetary terms is particularly challenging⁸⁶, though their study was able to generate a number of monetary (and non-monetary) estimates, including:

- Digitally included individuals are likely to perform better academically (increase of ¼ GCSE grade per subject);
- Computer/internet use commands salary premiums (3-10 per cent);
- Government services can make significant savings through mediated interactions. For instance, one of the NHS Direct online initiatives was predicted to save it £68 million in 2008;
- Companies can increase customer base and sales volumes (online spend is on average 20 per cent higher than offline);
- There is a positive impact on GDP to the economy (upwards of 1.54 per cent over three years);
- According to price comparison site uSwitch.com, the average saving generated using price comparison websites is 13 per cent for groceries, 15 per cent for travel and 21 per cent for services⁸⁷. Assuming a saving of 13 per cent on the average internet shopping basket (£606, Verdict 2007), this might save consumers £90.55 per year in monetary terms alone. Calculating for the benefits derived through greater choice and a reduction in search time and cost, the report cited a survey by Demos/Post Office Ltd which found the total per consumer benefit of shopping online to be worth approximately £283 per year.

In terms of infrastructure, the Wales Office (June 2014)⁸⁸ has suggested that every £1 invested in improved broadband infrastructure 'will generate £20 worth of benefits to the economy over the years to come'.

Finally, the *UK Digital Inclusion Strategy July 2014*⁸⁹ draws some general findings about the monetary (and potentially monetary) benefits of digital

⁸⁶ UK Online Centres (2008) *Economic benefits of Digital Inclusion: building the evidence*

⁸⁷ According to price comparison site uSwitch.com

⁸⁸ Wales Office (June 2014) *Building a more prosperous Wales: Infrastructure for a modern economy*, Telecommunications.

⁸⁹ *UK Digital Inclusion Strategy July 2014*

inclusion and presents findings from Booz & Company, a management consulting firm, that estimated that if everyone in the UK was able to go online, it would add another £63 billion to the economy (equivalent to a £2 billion boost to the Welsh economy)⁹⁰.

In summary, while there have been developments in the approaches to measuring the costs and benefits of digital inclusion there remains a clear need for more (and more robust) data to be generated on those costs and benefits. Despite this, and despite a number of key challenges remaining – most notably in relation to the oldest age groups, those living in social housing, those not in employment and those living with long term disabilities/illness - the data presented in this section shows that considerable progress has been made in securing digital inclusion in Wales in recent years. The overall message from the data is therefore a positive one.

⁹⁰ Based on GDP Welsh GDP (2012) £47.3billion and UK GDP (2012) £1,570billion (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Wales and <https://www.statista.com/>)

3.0 Findings: Rationale and Policy 'Fit' in the Context of Changing Policy

Key Findings

Stakeholders generally believed that Communities 2.0 continued to have considerable relevance to the wider policy agenda. In particular, the strong emphasis of the UK Government on delivering welfare benefits online had contributed to driving up demand for support from individuals and had spurred greater engagement with the digital inclusion agenda on the part of other public and third sector organisations.

This was also seen as having contributed to an increasing focus on work with individuals rather than on organisations and a narrower focus on accessing and using the internet.

Other key contextual factors identified by stakeholders as influencing the development of the Programme were the rapid growth in internet access from portable devices (notably tablets and smart phones) and the sharp pressure on public expenditure driving more Welsh public services online.

As we have seen in Chapter 2, digital inclusion has continued since the time of our Interim Evaluation to be a significant focus of both UK Government and Welsh Government policy, driven principally by two considerations – the first being the recognition of the close link between digital exclusion and social exclusion (with, in the case of the Welsh Government, digital inclusion being increasingly seen as a key plank of the centrally important anti-poverty strategy) and the second being the increasing focus on the need to achieve savings in the delivery of public services by using online channels rather than more labour intensive ones such as local service centres and call centres. As we noted in our Interim Evaluation, this second factor became increasingly significant when the UK Government flagged up its intention to pursue a 'digital by default' strategy, particularly in regard to benefit payments, in particular Universal Credit.

Although the roll-out of Universal Credit has repeatedly been delayed, the majority of staff and stakeholders we interviewed referred to changes to the welfare system – including demanding targets set for the JobCentre network for the proportion of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claims made online and the requirement on job seekers to demonstrate that they were registered on and made regular use of the Universal Job Match (UJM) website – as increasing the relevance and importance of the Programme. These changes in the external environment were thought to have influenced the Programme through:

- Driving demand from individuals, particularly jobseekers, who needed to acquire basic ICT skills or risk losing their benefits: this was widely seen as providing a ‘stick’ in terms of generating interest in digital inclusion alongside the ‘carrots’ in the form of the efforts by Programme staff to find ways of switching people on to the benefits of ICT literacy;
- Increasing the interest of other public sector bodies in the digital inclusion agenda. In particular, it was argued that the broader potential impact of UK Government welfare reform on the poorest in society had led to a new focus on the part of local authorities and housing associations in particular on increasing benefit take-up (which in turn was seen as either already requiring or about to require digital literacy) in order both to ensure well-being and to safeguard revenues.

At the same time, some stakeholders argued that the pressures on public sector finances were driving a stronger acceptance on the part of Welsh Government, local authorities and others that a more pro-active approach to migrating their own services online was inevitable, thus adding to the pressure to engage with the digital inclusion agenda⁹¹. More narrowly, perhaps, some services, notably libraries, were thought by a small number of interviewees to have become increasingly enthused to partner with Communities 2.0 on the basis that this could help to demonstrate their relevance and importance to the community in new ways at a time, when their core function was being

⁹¹ The increased focus on digital delivery – and the importance of digital inclusion in this context has subsequently been recognised in the Welsh Government’s *Digital First Strategy*, published in April 2015.

challenged by the availability of information online and when funding cuts were threatened.

‘it makes the library more viable and might protect it from closure’
(National stakeholder)

Of course, it is important to recognise that these external changes were not wholly independent of the Programme: many stakeholders suggested that the staff of Communities 2.0 had been effective at putting over the arguments about the importance of digital inclusion in this new context to local authorities, housing associations, libraries and others.

However, many stakeholders also believed that cuts in local services were having a negative impact on the Programme, particularly in the last year or two as significant cuts to local authority budgets had started to bite and staff became increasingly focused on whether or not they would keep their jobs, with the example of the closure of libraries in Rhondda Cynon Taf being cited by a number of stakeholders:

‘public sector cut-backs have really held us back’ (National stakeholder).

The impact of these changes was seen to be not just in terms of the overall relevance and salience of the Programme but also in terms of the changing focus of the Programme. It was almost universally recognised by stakeholders that during the second phase of the Programme there had been a much stronger focus on reaching and supporting individuals, either directly or more importantly mediated through the geographical and digital initiatives which had effectively become an absolutely central focus of the Programme, as well as - in the last months of the Programme - by the new National Campaign. This, it was generally thought, had led to the work with voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises being, if not marginalised, then given less emphasis in terms of the delivery of the Programme. This was despite the re-organisation into area teams and a stronger push on ensuring that, where possible, work with voluntary and community organisations

seriously addressed the extent to which they could act as a channel to promote digital inclusion.

Again a majority of the staff and stakeholders interviewed pointed to a second impact of the external policy changes on the Programme, namely an increasing focus on getting people online as the manifestation of digital inclusion. This narrower focus was criticised by a few interviewees who felt it underplayed the richness of what digital inclusion should be about, and also required a re-purposing of the role and involvement of some of the Communities 2.0 partners, with a lessening of interest, for example, in digital storytelling as a means of engaging people. However, a larger number welcomed the greater clarity which the focus on getting people online gave to the overall 'mission' of the Programme.

Some stakeholders saw this increasing focus on getting individuals on line as reflecting the growing importance for the Welsh Government of an anti-poverty strategy which, while focused on the poorest communities, recognised that social – and digital – exclusion was not confined to the most deprived areas and thus linked it to the gradual relaxation of the spatial focus of the Programme to enable activity outside the 30% most deprived LSOAs. This was widely welcomed – indeed, no-one voiced any criticism of this change. In a similar vein, the extension of the Programme to all parts of East Wales was universally welcomed, though a small number of stakeholders regretted that this had come so late in the day.

Apart from these major changes in the policy environment, the main contextual change which a majority of stakeholders pointed to was the rapid developments in technology over the lifetime of the Programme, in particular the introduction and swift adoption of smart phones and tablets. This was universally seen as making it easier to engage with a wider range of individuals – in particular, the elderly were seen as more likely to find tablets more intuitive to use than laptops or PCs. However, this was also thought by some stakeholders to have posed additional challenges to those delivering the support to be flexible in their approach.

4.0 Findings: Programme Delivery Processes and Arrangements

4.1 Introduction

As a final evaluation, this report deals only briefly with process issues internal to the Programme (we consider wider relationships with external stakeholders in Chapter 6 and process issues related to the support are dealt with in Chapter 7). In this section, drawing principally on the views of staff and stakeholders we consider the effectiveness of programme management processes.

Key Findings

In general, feedback from stakeholders and staff suggested relationships between WEFO, the DIU and the delivery partners had been very good, with the Programme management team being seen as very responsive to changing Welsh Government priorities, while trying to juggle the distinct elements of the Programme (support to social enterprises, to voluntary and community organisations and to individuals). For some staff, this had been problematic, but for the most part relationships between the delivery partners had been good, with each making a distinct contribution (though not necessarily in the same way as envisaged at the outset).

The introduction of area teams in phase 2 was generally seen as a significant improvement, though performance was thought to vary from area to area.

4.2 Relations between WEFO, the Welsh Government and the Programme

In broad terms, all those interviewed agreed that relationships during the second phase between WEFO, the Digital Inclusion Unit and the Programme, notably the WCC as the lead contractor, had been very good, with any issues

dealt with effectively as they arose. While slow progress against some targets – particularly those agreed with WEFO relating to social enterprise creation and new jobs - was a concern for some interviewees, it was generally accepted that the Programme had made serious efforts to reach these ERDF driven targets in difficult economic circumstances.

There was a general consensus that the Programme managers had been very willing to demonstrate flexibility in the way in which they responded to the changes in the policy environment, for example, the closer integration of digital inclusion with anti-poverty work and the increasing focus on supporting individuals to get online in order to ensure they had access to welfare benefits.

For some, perhaps particularly within the staff, there was a feeling that this flexibility had been excessive and that the partners had been less assertive than they might have been in defending the original nature of the contract agreed with Welsh Government. But most stakeholders felt that this flexibility had been necessary in a six year Programme that was delivering in the context of rapid technological, economic and political change and that ultimately it had been a real strength.

4.3 Programme Management and Relations between the Delivery Partners

Again, here, in general terms, stakeholders felt that the Programme had succeeded in managing the core delivery partnership through significant external and internal changes, although partners did have somewhat varied views of the effectiveness of internal communications, while some staff felt that they had been faced with a fairly constant flow of changing requests and requirements from managers as to what their priorities should be. In response Programme managers recognised that partners and staff had been required to adapt significantly to meet the changing focus of the Programme and to ensure that targets were met, and felt that this had been broadly accepted on the basis of the 'greater good'. It was argued that the partnership

had been managed in a broadly consensual rather than hierarchical way, even though contractual responsibility for delivery rested first and foremost with the WCC.

It was recognised by several interviewees that both Carmarthenshire Council and PAVS had made very significant contributions to the delivery of the Programme (in the former case by providing a clear example of what could be achieved by an intensive use of volunteers in the direct delivery of digital inclusion to the target groups and in the latter by developing a cadre of Circuit Riders across Wales focused on working with third sector organisations in a strategic way and rolling out digital practitioner training). However, these interviewees felt that Carmarthenshire County Council and PAVS had not necessarily succeeded in achieving the original intention of creating a 'way in' to the broader national networks of Welsh local government and CVCs. In the case of both PAVS and the third partner, GEECS, Communities 2.0 was seen to have been a highly important area of activity, but not one strongly aligned with the core business of the organisations concerned.

In terms of the move to area teams (which came about at the start of phase 2), this was generally seen as representing a real improvement, not least in terms of ensuring a smoother service to supported organisations, with better communications between different partners' staff (though arguably the collapse of Novas Scarman and the transfer of its staff into the WCC had an effect here). However, focus groups with the staff suggested that some tensions remained, not least between Brokers and Circuit Riders⁹², with some of the latter arguing that - in terms of the work with organisations at least - Brokers were an unnecessary 'middle man' between organisations who approached the Programme and the Circuit Riders who delivered most of the support and the former suggesting that some staff were unduly inflexible in their approach.

⁹² See Section 2.1, p. 12 for an explanation of these roles

Perhaps inevitably, it did seem clear that the area team concept had worked better in some areas than in others, particularly where there was strong leadership from a dynamic Broker. At the same time, a number of interviewees commented on the lack of evenness in terms of the intensity of support available to different areas, with the non-Convergence areas of East Wales having consistently been perceived as ‘the poor relation’.

A number of stakeholders noted that in reality the Programme had consisted of at least three quite distinct elements – support to voluntary and community organisations, support to social enterprises and digital inclusion activities directed at individuals - and that, as one interviewee noted, achieving the balance between delivering a digital initiative Programme to meet the Welsh Government’s agenda and delivering an ERDF funded project with a focus on outputs relating to social enterprises had been a challenge: getting the balance in terms of resourcing both elements had not always been easy, or right.

5.0 Findings: Performance

5.1 Introduction

In this Section, we consider performance against the targets set for the Programme – both by WEFO and ‘internally’ by DIU – and in terms of financial outturns. We first consider what the monitoring data tells us (Section 5.2) before turning to financial progress (Section 5.3) and reporting on the perceptions of staff and national stakeholders about performance (Section 5.4).

Key Findings

The Programme exceeded most of the targets set, with a particularly strong achievement in terms of individual beneficiaries supported. Progress in terms of enterprises created and new jobs was less impressive, though still representing a reasonable achievement, given the economic climate and the strong focus during phase 2 on support to individuals, while support to enterprises on the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and environmental sustainability showed reasonably good results after a slow start. There was a modest underspend on the Programme of around 4%.

5.2 Progress against Targets

The targets agreed between WEFO, the DIU and the WCC as lead partner were re-profiled a number of times during the lifetime of the Programme, most recently at the start of phase 2 in April 2012. In Table 9 (over) we present the original targets for the Programme in West Wales and the Valleys, the targets as re-profiled in April 2012 and the final out-turn: figures for the whole of Wales are shown in brackets⁹³.

⁹³ The definition of the targets and the evidence gathered to support outputs is discussed in our Scoping Report

Table 9: Communities 2.0 Achievements against Targets

Objective	Description	Original Target	Re-profiled Target	Achieved
Objective 1	To assist community groups and voluntary sector organisations in adopting and/or exploiting ICT.	360	360 (380)	388 (418)
Objective 2	To assist existing Enterprises in adopting and/or exploiting ICT.	120	265 (275)	361 (386)
Objective 3	To financially support existing Enterprises to adopt and/or exploit ICT	120	125 (130)	127 (134)
Objective 4	To assist in establishing new Enterprises around the exploitation of ICT to enhance their performance internally and externally.	50	50 (50)	33 (33)
Objective 5	To deliver initiatives to address barriers to ICT.	6	5 (5)	5 (5)
Objective 6	To assist individuals to progress in the jobs market.	200	325 (345)	361 (385)
Objective 7	To support Enterprises, assisted by this project, to adopt or improve their equality strategies (including equality monitoring systems).	120	120 (120)	70 (70)
Objective 8	To signpost Enterprises adopting or improving Environmental Management Systems.	48	48 ⁹⁴ (48)	67 (67)
Objective 9	To benefit individuals over the lifetime of the project.	20,000	20,000 (25,600)	54,563 (61,250)
Objective 10	To create gross new jobs (FTE).	100	100 (100)	73.8FTE (73.8)

As will be seen, the Programme met or exceeded both its original and revised targets for six of the ten Objectives, including achieving almost three times the original target for individual beneficiaries and met its re-profiled target for a seventh.

In terms of the targets for the cross-cutting themes of equal opportunities and environmental sustainability (Objectives 7 and 8), the Programme made relatively good progress after a poor start, thanks to the development of an ipad-based analytical tool for use by enterprises assisted by the Programme. Even so, the more ambitious target set for equal opportunities was not

⁹⁴ The original target of 48 agreed with WEFO was not revised upwards, though informally WCC and the delivery partners agreed at the start of Phase 2 to aim to achieve 120 enterprises assisted, in line with the target for equality strategies.

reached, albeit that in all, around 20% of all enterprises assisted were also supported in terms of equalities and environmental management policies.

The two remaining targets for gross new jobs and for new enterprises were not reached, despite the fact that WEFO had relaxed the definitions of gross new jobs in response to the economic recession to include project jobs.

Table 10 (over) provides more detail about the distribution across Wales of the outputs (showing both the Convergence and the non-Convergence area,).

Overall, and in contrast to the situation at the time of our Interim Report, the distribution of activity across the Convergence area broadly appears representative of the population of different local authority areas, albeit that:

- In terms of the voluntary and community organisations, Pembrokeshire and Neath Port Talbot were very strongly represented and North Wales and Bridgend less so;
- Relatively few social enterprises were supported in Carmarthenshire, whereas (relative to population) the number supported in Anglesey and Pembrokeshire was disproportionately high;
- The highest concentration of supported individuals was in the Heads of the Valleys areas of Blaenau Gwent and Merthyr Tydfil, where over 4% of the population were recorded as beneficiaries, which seems highly appropriate;
- In North Wales, relatively few individuals were supported in Conwy and Denbighshire, whereas Anglesey and Gwynedd were well represented.

The numbers supported outside the Convergence area were generally far smaller, reflecting the shorter period during which the Programme operated and then more limited resources deployed.

Table 10: Distribution of outputs by Local Authority Area

County	Objective 1 Organisations Assisted	Objective 2 Enterprises Assisted	Objective 9 Individuals Assisted
Anglesey	13	23	2197
Blaenau Gwent	14	17	3122
Bridgend	15	22	3797
Caerphilly	38	32	5128
Cardiff	0	0	870
Carmarthen	30	20	5374
Ceredigion	25	16	2163
Conwy	7	19	1984
Denbighshire	14	13	2081
Flintshire	11	7	1429
Gwynedd	13	24	3897
Merthyr Tydfil	17	13	2681
Monmouthshire	0	0	551
Neath Port Talbot	45	22	5653
Newport	0	0	948
Pembrokeshire	70	26	2484
Powys	9	12	1386
Rhondda Cynon Taff	35	51	5236
Swansea	38	40	5650
Torfaen	14	23	2354
Vale of Glamorgan	0	0	565
Wrexham	10	6	1612
Outside Wales	0	0	88
Totals	418	386	61250

In terms of the demographic composition of the beneficiary population, monitoring data revealed that:

- A majority (59% or 36,094) of the beneficiaries were women, with only 41% being men;
- Of those stating their age, more than half were aged 55 and over and just under two-fifths over 65 (see Table 11);
- Of those stating whether or not they had a disability, more than a fifth said that they did, in line with the overall population in Wales, although because of the high level of those not responding, this represented a relatively modest proportion of the whole beneficiary population (3,399 or 6%);

Table 11: Age of Communities 2.0 Project Beneficiaries (up to September 2014)

	Number	Proportion (percentage)
11 to 14	211	0
15 to 24	4,072	7
25 to 54	17,507	29%
55 to 64	7,736	13%
65 plus	20,664	34%
Not stated	11,060	18%
Total	61,250	100⁹⁵

Source: Monitoring Data

- In terms of ethnicity, again less than a quarter of all beneficiaries provided data with regard to this: 658 beneficiaries said they were of Black or Ethnic Minority, representing 5.0% of those responding (in line with the population of Wales as a whole) or 1.1% of all beneficiaries;
- A total of 3,673 beneficiaries said they were Welsh speaking, representing 21.5% of those that provided information about this this (in line with the population of Wales as a whole) and 6% of all beneficiaries.

From this evidence, it would appear that the Programme performed relatively well in terms of ensuring that it reached all parts of the population, albeit with a heavy (and justifiable, given the profile of digital exclusion) bias towards older people.

5.3 Financial Performance

Table 12 (over) shows financial performance compared to the budget originally agreed.

⁹⁵ Percentages do not sum due to rounding

Table 12: Financial Spend

						£	
		Convergence	Competitiveness (North East and Powys)		Competitiveness (South East)	DIU costs	Total
Expenditure		17,940,927	1,005,026	913,714	1,200,000	21,059,667	
Budget		18,704,430	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,220,000	21,924,430	
Variance		-763,503	+5,026	-86,286	-20,000	-864,763	
Out-turn percentage of budget	as of	95.9%	100.5%	91.4%	98.3%	96.1%	

As will be seen, in respect of the Convergence area, there was an underspend of around 4% compared to the originally agreed budget, suggesting relatively good financial management. In the competitiveness area there was a contrast between a proportionately somewhat greater underspend in South-East Wales – the last area to come on stream – and marginal overspend in Powys and North-East Wales.

5.4 Stakeholder views

National stakeholders generally had a good level of awareness of Programme performance and were also generally positive about the achievements, notably in terms of individuals. While a handful of interviewees felt that the original target of 20,000 had been unambitious and while some also noted that the numbers themselves gave little feeling of the intensity (or lack of it) of the support (see also Section 7.3), most felt that there was a good reason to be highly satisfied with this achievement.

Similarly, most stakeholders took the view that the Programme had done well to meet the target for organisations assisted, albeit again that a small number felt that this had not been particularly stretching or suggested that, while reasonable, the target nevertheless highlighted the fact that the Programme was doing little more than scratching the surface, given the scale of the third sector in Wales.

In terms of those targets where the Programme did not fully meet its targets, it was widely accepted that any hope of reaching the jobs created target had been undermined by the scale and depth of the recession which had hit Wales and the UK more generally (with a number of interviewees noting that other ERDF funded projects had experienced similar shortfalls). In terms of social enterprises created, a number of interviewees pointed to the fact that WEFO had so far at least ruled that enterprise creation could not be counted by more than one ERDF project, and what was seen by some as a proliferation of generic social enterprise business support projects. While these often referred clients to the more specialist support offered by

Communities 2.0, the referring project had generally already claimed relevant outputs. More specifically, it was reported that in practice at least 55 start-up social enterprises had been assisted by Communities 2.0 following referrals from the WCC's own Social Enterprise Support project which could not be counted for this reason.

This in part was said to explain the fact that while the social enterprise creation target was missed, the target for existing enterprises assisted had been significantly exceeded. In this context it was also argued that the project had resisted the temptation to 'chase targets' by agreeing to provide financial support to enterprises, except where it was clear that the funding would assist in achieving a culture change in terms of longer-term financial sustainability, thus depressing the number of enterprises financially supported but increasing the number of enterprises assisted

In terms of the cross-cutting themes of environmental sustainability and equal opportunities, one interviewee argued that the Programme had got to grips with these after a slow start, when staff were uncertain as to how to operationalise these effectively and highlighted the development of an app for Brokers to use with supported organisations which produced a report on their equalities and environmental policies, identifying potential actions and improvements.

6.0 Findings: Awareness and Perceptions

6.1 Introduction

In this Section we consider the extent to which Communities 2.0 has generated awareness of the Programme and the way in which it has engaged with external stakeholders.

Key Findings

In general terms, the Programme seems to have been highly effective at raising awareness of digital inclusion amongst key stakeholders and at working with partners, particularly through the digital initiatives, albeit that the intensity of the lead provided by Programme staff varied across these.

Raising more general awareness of voluntary and community organisations and of the general public about Communities 2.0 and digital inclusion proved more challenging, although the web-survey suggested that local stakeholders were generally positive about the tools and techniques used by the Programme.

6.2 Awareness of the Programme

Stakeholders generally felt that those involved in managing and delivering Communities 2.0 had worked hard to generate awareness of the Programme itself and of digital inclusion more generally but several felt that this work had been hampered until very recently by the fact it was not an all-Wales Programme and thus could not mount a national media campaign even if resources had allowed.

‘Achieving that spread [to East Wales] was crucial not only to meet need but also to give the project the credibility it needed.... It was very difficult to market, because it’s the first thing the Western Mail and the likes will pick up on.’ (National Stakeholder)

It was noted, however, that this was being undertaken as part of the final year's activities, with the Ministerial launch of the national campaign in July 2014. Communities 2.0 staff in particular stressed that the website was not intended as a major means of generating awareness but was more a means of communicating with and providing resources for partners and intermediaries. It was argued that the Programme had made significant efforts in terms of a social media presence, and this was thought by staff in particular to have proved an effective means of communication.

At the same time, a number of interviewees made the point that the voluntary and community sector in Wales was vast and diverse and that the Programme could not have been expected to do more than scratch the surface in terms of reaching – and certainly supporting – third sector organisations.

This was reflected in the feedback from organisations interviewed during the fieldwork. A large majority of those organisations interviewed for the first time in 2013 and 2014 said that they had either come across the Programme by chance or had been introduced through earlier contacts with key individuals or organisations (in two cases, they had been referred from the Community Economic Development Fund in South East Wales, while both PAVS and Menter Môn were clearly good at cross-referral of clients originally helped on other matters). Very few had come across specific Communities 2.0 events, promotional literature or activities, and most were unfamiliar with the website, although one of the good practice organisations said that they had become aware of the Programme through receiving a 'flyer or e-mail' and another had found out about the Programme through local newspapers.

Many of those we interviewed felt that knowledge and awareness of Communities 2.0 in the third sector remained limited – even as the interest and awareness of digital inclusion as an issue increased, due in large part to the UK Government's 'digital by default' approach to claiming benefits payments. Thus one representative of a larger social enterprise (strongly appreciative of the support provided by the Programme) felt that few of their

peers were aware of the initiative, while another good practice case-study thought that knowledge of Communities 2.0 within the sector was patchy.

In this context two organisations thought the language used by the Programme could be off-putting:

‘I mean what exactly are “Circuit Riders”? What does Communities 2.0 mean? It’s not language that the ordinary person understands and that’s a major problem when you are trying to promote a Programme.’

This was echoed by a small number of stakeholders, with one arguing, for example, that there was ‘brand confusion’ between Communities 2.0 and the various digital initiatives and that Communities 2.0 was a less appealing identity than ‘Get RCT On-line’ or ‘Get NPT On-line’.

By contrast, the web-survey provided quite strong evidence that Communities 2.0 was succeeding in raising awareness of digital inclusion, even allowing for the fact that the 50 local stakeholders responding were disproportionately likely to be individuals who themselves had worked closely with the Programme.

More than three-quarters of web-survey respondents thought that voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises were likely to have heard about digital inclusion directly from Communities 2.0, a greater proportion than any other source of information⁹⁶ (see Table 13). Interestingly, only a third identified CVCs as a source of information.

⁹⁶ Respondents could select multiple responses.

Table 13: How third sector organisations usually hear about digital inclusion

Source of Information	Number of respondents	Numbers
Directly from the Communities 2.0 Programme		38
From other organisations in their sector		32
From other Digital Inclusion projects		24
From Public Sector Organisations		23
Media sources (e.g. TV, newspapers)		20
From users of their services		18
From sector related associations		18
From County Voluntary Councils		16
From their funders		10
From specialist advisors/consultants		9
Don't know		4
Other		1

Source: Web-Survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

Similarly, more than half of the respondents thought that public sector organisations usually heard about digital inclusion from Communities 2.0, second only to 'other public sector organisations'⁹⁷ (see Table 14).

Table 14: How public sector organisations usually hear about digital inclusion?

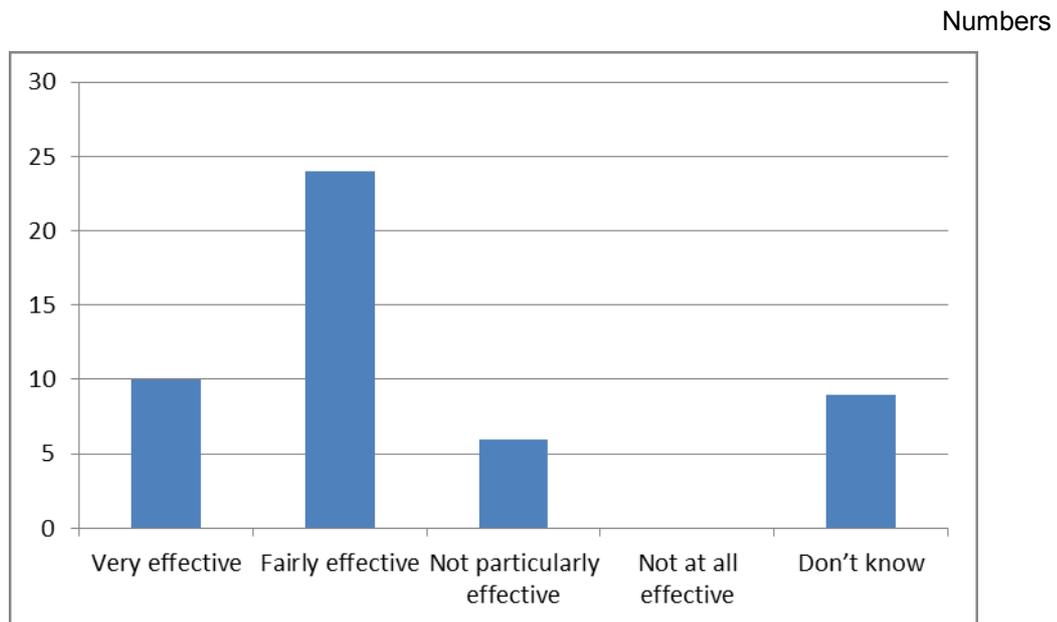
Source of Information	Number of respondents	Numbers
From other public sector organisations		34
Directly from the Communities 2.0 Programme		28
From sector related associations		24
From other Digital Inclusion Initiatives (e.g. BT)		22
Media sources (e.g. TV, newspapers)		17
From users of their services		17
From their funders		13
From specialist advisors/consultants		9
Don't know		6
Other		1

Source: Web-Survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

⁹⁷ Respondents could select multiple responses.

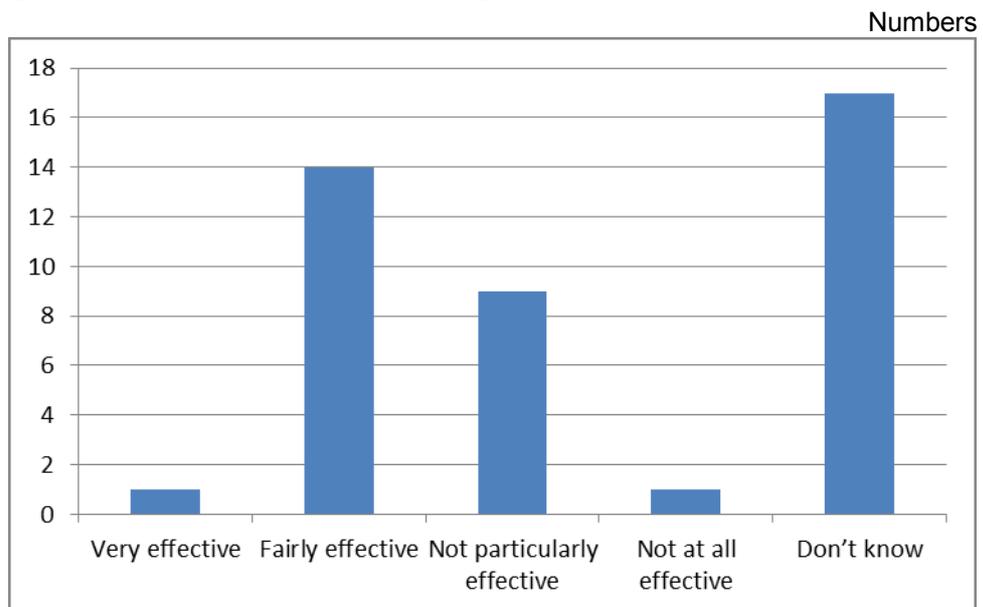
Web-survey respondents were generally positive about the means of communication used by Communities 2.0 (see Figure 1, 2 and 3), although this was more true of the website and the case-studies produced by the Programme staff, than of the social media campaign, where more than a third of respondents felt unable to comment (implying they were unaware of this aspect of the Programme’s media presence or did not use social media more generally) and a further fifth believed that the campaign was not effective.

Figure 1: Effectiveness of Communities 2.0 Web Presence



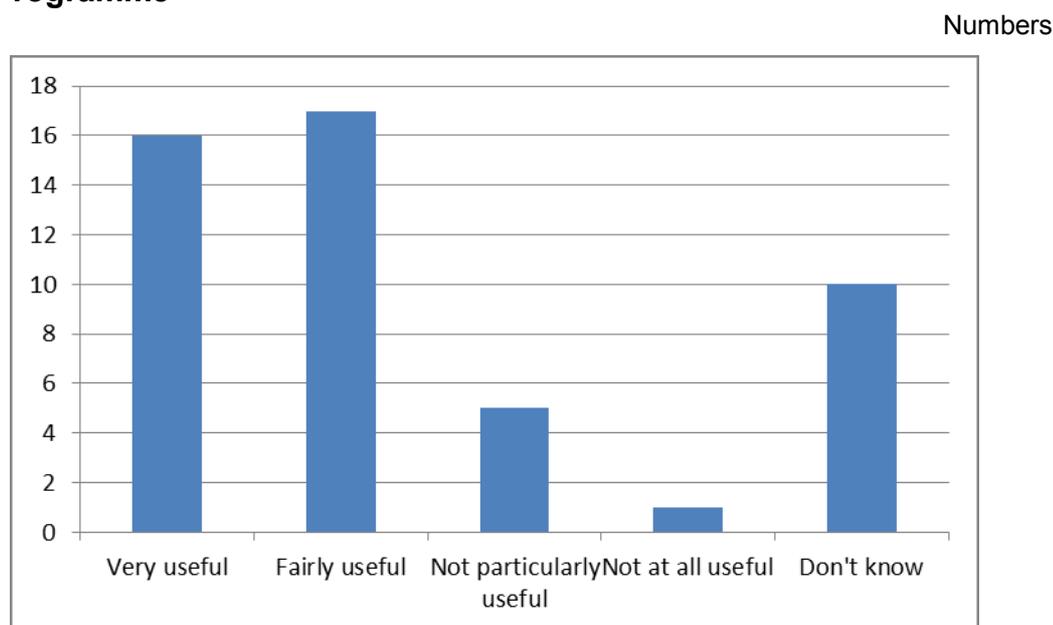
Source: Web Survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

Figure 2: Effectiveness of Communities 2.0 Social Media Presence



Source: Web Survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

Figure 3: Usefulness of case-study materials produced by Communities 2.0 Programme



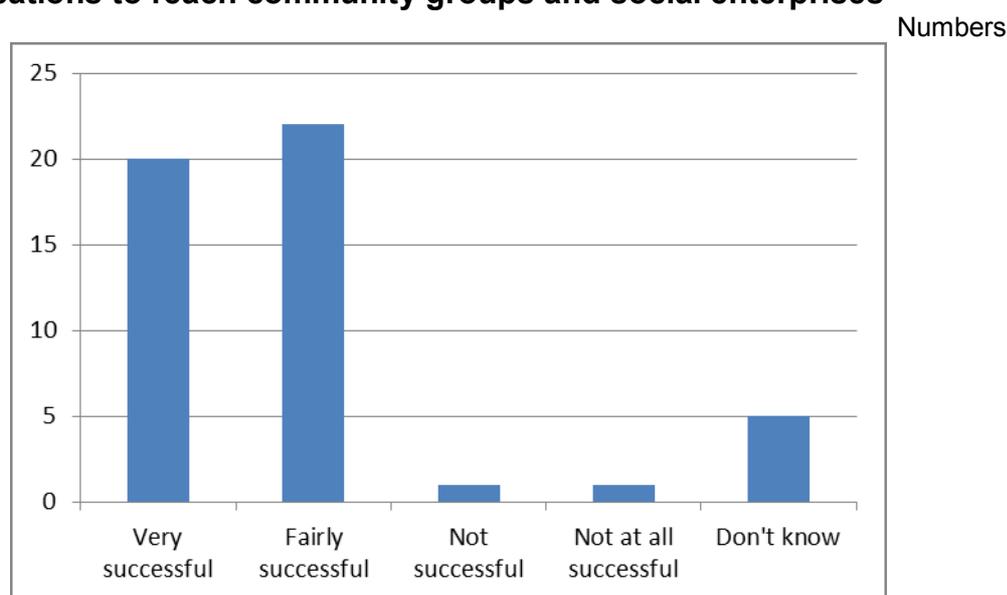
Source: Web Survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

11 respondents said that they had used individual case-studies within their own organisations, for example as a way of providing evidence to influence the thinking of colleagues.

6.3 Relations with, and Perceptions of, External Stakeholders

The local stakeholders responding to the web-survey also suggested that Communities 2.0 had a good track record of working with external organisations in the public and third sectors. Almost all of those responding thought that Communities 2.0 had been either very successful or fairly successful at using intermediary organisations, such as Local Authorities, CVCs or Communities First clusters to reach community groups and social enterprises, for example (Figure 4). Asked to comment further, four respondents highlighted in particular positive working with libraries, while eight commented on collaboration with CVCs, though in the latter case there were somewhat more mixed views, with two suggesting there could have been closer working with the CVC in their area.

Figure 4: Success of Communities 2.0 in using intermediary organisations to reach community groups and social enterprises



Source: Web Survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

The views of local stakeholders were echoed by the interviews with national stakeholders who had experience of working with the Programme. With only one exception (an interviewee who felt that the Programme management had been insufficiently proactive in terms of trying to shape policy), these were very positive indeed about the way in which Communities 2.0 Programme managers and staff had sought to work with and through their own organisations or those that they represented.

‘I would say that C2.0 has been one of, or possibly the, best all-Wales initiative that’ve I’ve seen’ (National Stakeholder).

In particular, national stakeholders and interviewees from the digital initiative case-studies highlighted the enthusiasm and imagination with which Communities 2.0 staff had sought to relate digital inclusion to their own organisational needs, for example by providing support both directly and through digital initiatives to libraries so that they could better respond to the referrals of jobseekers made to them by JobCentres (and thus both helping the JobCentres to meet targets and the libraries to respond to the needs of communities). Interviewees also highlighted the flexibility with which the Programme responded to changing circumstances, for example, re-orientating its support to disabled people to focus more on direct delivery when it became

clear that it was difficult to identify 'digital champions' within disability organisations.

Interviewees also highlighted generally strong working relationships with the new Communities First clusters (though these inevitably varied between areas): in two digital initiative case-study areas (C and D), for example, there was a close integration between the Work Clubs run by the Communities First clusters and digital inclusion sessions run by the digital initiative in question.

More generally, digital initiatives, based on bringing together relevant partners to deliver digital inclusion on the ground, were widely seen as a major success of the Programme, with brokers having played a crucial role in facilitating partnership working, often in an environment where there was mistrust or poor working relationships between key organisations.

In all of the five digital initiative case-studies, Communities 2.0 was instrumental in instigating as well as funding the initiatives and in bringing together relevant partners to work together and in at least three of them (A, C,E), it was Communities 2.0 staff who did much of the work of preparing the application for consideration by the Panel. As a result the overwhelming view of partners was that the process of getting the project approved was 'relatively straightforward' although in one case (B), the Panel was thought to have taken a long time to deal with the application.

In two of the digital initiative case-studies (B, E), some partners who initially were signed up were not thought to have been particularly active (in one case, this was local Communities First Partnerships where capacity had been affected by structural changes) but in general, case-study interviewees argued strongly that the right partners had been engaged. In one case (E), Communities 2.0 had continued to broker new linkages after the initiative got underway and brought two valuable specialist partners on board who had contributed significantly to project delivery.

More generally, in terms of the implementation of the digital initiatives, the extent of the engagement of Communities 2.0 staff seemed to vary quite considerably. In two (C, E), Communities 2.0 had made an important contribution to project management in the early stages - with the broker in one (C) being seen by many interviewees as a part of the team - and had also helped in the delivery of public-facing sessions, while in one of these (C) and other digital initiatives, Communities 2.0 had delivered 'train the trainer' sessions to volunteers who had been recruited.

While interviewees across all case-study projects were generally positive about the inputs from Communities 2.0 staff, the extent of this enthusiasm did vary in line with the intensity of the involvement, and one interviewee with insight across a number of case-study projects noted that the quality and enthusiasm of staff in different areas was rather variable.

Thus in three case-studies (A, C and E), almost all of those interviewed were deeply impressed with the inputs from the Communities 2.0 team, with the overall impression of Communities 2.0 staff as proactive, enthusiastic and supportive of external partners:

'I cannot speak highly enough of the support we've received from [name of broker] in particular and the Coop Centre in general' (Case-study C interviewee)

'I couldn't ask for anything more from them [C2.0]' (Case-study E interviewee)

'Everything we needed was there from the beginning' (Case-study A interviewee)

But in other areas views were somewhat more mixed: thus in case-study D, project staff thought that there had been 'not a great deal of support to be honest' from Communities 2.0 staff, apart from regular monitoring meetings, with a particular source of grievance being that no-one from the Communities 2.0 team was said to have come to the launch event, although more senior

staff within the lead organisation and interviewees from partner organisations were more positive. In the final case-study (B), lead partner interviewees did not think that the broker had provided much in the way of support for them and were fairly critical of the broker's (lack of) decision making ability, while the broker talked of their role mostly in terms of monitoring and reporting rather than supporting delivery.

The evaluation gathered less evidence on partnership with the private sector, although stakeholders reported that Programme staff had been actively engaged in a number of initiatives, for example with Asda (which it was suggested had been tricky because local managers had not necessarily given this the priority which corporate management at UK level had pledged, leading to poorly attended events in some instances), and more recently with Barclays Bank 'digital eagle' Programmes, where Communities 2.0 was providing training to Bank staff and volunteers.

7.0 Findings: Support Provided and Satisfaction

7.1 Introduction

In this section, we consider the evidence from our surveys, our fieldwork with assisted organisations and stakeholders and our digital initiatives case-studies to provide insight into the nature of the support provided both to organisations and to individuals, and to the views on the part of those assisted as to the quality and appropriateness of that support. We turn first to the support for voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises.

Key Findings

The support to voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises was strongly welcomed by organisations which received it, with high levels of satisfaction expressed. This was qualified in some instances by a view that the systems around applying for 'packages of support' were unduly onerous and a frustration on the part of some staff that what they regarded as an arbitrary distinction between social enterprises (who qualified for financial support) and voluntary and community organisations (who did not) hampered the effectiveness of support to the latter.

Many of the interventions with organisations focused on fairly functional support, although in phase 2 there was a much stronger emphasis on taking a more holistic view rather than simply dealing with the expressed needs of the organisation. In particular, there appeared in phase 2 to be a stronger emphasis on trying to use organisational assistance as a way of securing the digital inclusion of individuals, though this was less true of support for social enterprises and was generally less successful than had been hoped at the start of the Programme.

In terms of support for individuals, the evidence was significantly more positive. Many of the digital initiatives developed a real sense of momentum and the sort of informal learning offered was seen to have succeeded in reaching a wide range of excluded individuals. At the same time, it was recognised that some of the target groups – notably the disabled - had been more difficult to reach than others.

Our survey evidence strongly suggested that the Programme had generally been appropriately targeted in terms of individual beneficiaries, especially in phase 2, with beneficiaries overwhelmingly reporting that the support had been in the form of basic ICT courses, but with a significant element of support relating directly to access to welfare benefits.

7.2 Nature of Support Provided to Organisations and Satisfaction with the Support

In all, as noted in Chapter 1, over the lifetime of the evaluation we spoke to some 49 organisations and social enterprises supported by Communities 2.0: of these, 20 were social enterprises and 29 voluntary and community organisations. The findings of our first wave of interviews with 20 organisations interviewed in 2011 were reported in our Interim Evaluation.

It is worth noting that in many cases, the support received from Communities 2.0 had been relatively limited, and this relatively light touch approach probably accounted for some difficulties we experienced in achieving interviews with the groups we approached, with around half of those we asked to participate in 2013 and 2014 either refusing or being unable to see us⁹⁸.

This unusually high rate of difficulties (compared with other evaluations we have undertaken) probably reflected a number of issues which were also apparent during the 2011 fieldwork and reported in our Interim Evaluation, viz. the small scale and vulnerability of many of the organisations assisted, the

⁹⁸ See Technical Appendix

reliance on a small number of key staff or volunteers, and the often light-touch nature of the intervention by Communities 2.0.

7.2.1 Nature of Organisations Supported and Support Provided

In terms of the 21 organisations which we interviewed for the first time in 2013, there was perhaps a clearer distinction between those on the social enterprise database and those on the voluntary/community database than was the case in 2011. Of the seven social enterprises, four were clearly charities or not-for-profit companies which generated a significant proportion of their income from trading/commercial activities; one was largely reliant on grant (and was in the same 'family' of organisations as one assisted as a voluntary/community group) and two were for-profit businesses. While we recognise that the Programme supported enterprises of any legal form provided they had a social purpose, and in both cases there was some wider social benefit (one was in recycling and one in personal fitness), in neither case did the owners see themselves as being anything other than 'normal' small traders.

Of the voluntary/community organisations, only one generated significant income from trading - a housing association - but in this case participation was firmly linked to digital inclusion for its residents, rather than primarily related to its core business – and one other was seeking to do so. In this latter case, the manager was the sole interviewee to be deeply dissatisfied with the support offered by Communities 2.0 since they had been told the Programme could offer no support with, or funding for upgrading the organisation's website to enable it to trade on-line (even though this type of support was provided to social enterprises) – perhaps reflecting the fact this group had been categorised inappropriately. The majority of the other voluntary/community groups were volunteer-led, though four had a number of paid staff, largely funded by grants and two were Community Councils.

In terms of the good practice case-studies interviewed for the first time in 2014, all but three were social enterprises with paid staff, generally with significant income from trading.

It was reasonably clear from the fieldwork that Communities 2.0 had made changes to its approach to providing assistance to organisations during phase 2 of the Programme (and since the Interim Evaluation in 2011), with interventions generally appearing to be less narrow and ‘functional’ than we found in 2011. This is shown in Figure 15 (over) which compares the types of support provided to different organisations in the 2011 cohort (as categorised in the Interim Report), in the 2013 cohort and in the good practice sample⁹⁹.

Whereas in 2011, nearly half (nine) of the organisations effectively received support associated with only one issue (in six cases, upgrading websites), this was only true of four in 2013 and one of eight in 2014. Related to this, it was clear that in the majority of cases, the organisations had received an ICT review and a relatively full diagnostic (in some cases, even where this seemed unnecessary to the group itself – e.g. ‘we didn’t really need it because we had just set up with new kit’): 15 of the 29 organisations interviewed for the first time in 2013 and 2014 specifically referred to such a review and many found these of considerable value – even where they had not implemented the recommendations in full.

Even so help with practical issues such as establishing new or upgraded websites and/or social media presence and resolving problems with ICT equipment remained the main source of assistance sought and provided in the case of organisations within the random sample in 2013, whereas in the good practice organisations (which were, of course, much more heavily biased towards social enterprises), it was advice on purchasing new hardware and software which was the dominant theme.

⁹⁹ It should be emphasised that this categorisation is inevitably only approximate.

Table 15: Types of Support Provided to Organisations

Type of Support	2011 (20 in total)		2013 (21 in total)		2014 (8 in total ¹⁰⁰)	
	No. of Orgs. Supported	No of Orgs. Benefiting only from form of support	No. of Orgs. Supported	No of Orgs. Benefiting only from form of support	No. of Orgs. Supported	No of Orgs. Benefiting only from form of support
Website Development and associated training	9	6	11	3	3	-
Resolving problems with PCs/laptops/networks or networking PCs	7	1	6	-	1	-
Funding Packages	7	-	6	-	1	-
Training or taster sessions with general public	5	-	2	-	-	-
Training or taster sessions with members or clients	4	-	5	-	1	-
Training of key staff	2	1	4	-	5	-
Advice on purchasing ICT equipment	2	-	4	-	8	1
Training in digital storytelling	2	1	3	-	1	-
Funding for digital inclusion workers/digital initiatives	2	-	4	-	-	-
Developing volunteers to promote digital inclusion	2	-	1	-	-	-
Training or taster sessions with volunteers	1	-	N/A	-	1	-
Developing social media presence	1	-	4	1	1	-
EPOS and electronic tills	1	-	N/A	-	-	-
Recruitment of IT staff	N/A	-	1	-	-	-
Management of information – security	N/A	-	1	-	1	-
Introduction to other forms of support	-	-	-	-	3	-
No concrete support provided as yet – in development	3	-	1	-	-	-

Source: Interviews with assisted organisations in 2011, 2013 and 2014

¹⁰⁰ We have excluded here the one good practice organisation which had originally been interviewed as part of the random sample drawn in 2013

It was striking that even in the good practice organisations, interventions were, however often quite light-touch and sometimes inconclusive;

- In one, the involvement with Communities 2.0 had consisted of one meeting, where useful advice had been given about websites and social media and which the interviewee thought 'was just what we needed';
- In another, the assistance had consisted of advising a voluntary and community organisation on the purchase of a tablet and providing training on how to use it to the secretary and their partner;
- In a third, while a thorough ICT Review had been carried out, which had contained lots of useful ideas, some of the suggestions were thought unrealistic in terms of the available budget, while (despite work having gone into developing an application for a funding package), progress had stalled during a period of maternity leave:
'I would have liked our staff to have had more contact from them on how we are progressing';
- Similarly, in a fourth, while the organisation had found the advice in the ICT review very stimulating, many of the options were deemed unaffordable, and in practice few of the recommendations had been taken forward ('nothing has really come from it');
- In a fifth, the organisation had received two visits and a very valuable template specification to commission a new website design: but had decided not to pursue the option of an application for a funding package because it was seen as too onerous.

Consistent with the findings in 2011, the organisations which were interviewed for the first time in 2013, as well as the good practice organisations, reported a significant degree of additionality in terms of the support provided, in that around six (of 29 in all) felt that they would have struggled to fund or undertake the work at all, while a further 16 would have been able to take forward only part of it, had it not been for the inputs (either via funding

packages or via the staff themselves) from Communities 2.0. In four cases, however, no changes had resulted from involvement in the Programme, one interviewee was uncertain what would have happened and two organisations believed it would have paid for the same support but that the quality would have been the same or worse.

Interviewees from at least six of the 2013 organisations and three of the good practice organisations also specifically commented on the fact that there had been a stronger focus from Communities 2.0 than from commercial providers on building capacity so that the organisations themselves could maintain and update systems (particularly websites), without incurring additional or on-going costs – even though in some cases, interviewees felt that in practice, the skills and confidence acquired were or might be hard to sustain. Thus one group said that prior to coming into contact with the Programme, they had had some dealings with private sector consultants about a website but it had not previously occurred to them that they could build and maintain their own website with the help of training – ‘we’ve now got control of it, we can change it how we like’ - while a social enterprise interviewee noted:

‘When you pay a private company you always feel that they are filtering you down a path that suits them not you. You know, they have deals with other companies to use their products. In the past we felt that we’ve ended up paying above the odds because of that. But with Communities Two [sic] you don’t get that because they offer independent advice. So that gave us a lot of confidence.’

Other groups had strongly valued the independence of the advice from Communities 2.0 as a way of checking on what private sector contractors might offer them. Thus, one of the good practice organisations had been told by a contractor that the specification for the new server they required was higher than they needed but when they went back to the broker to check this, he reminded them that the new server was designed to meet their long term needs including significantly higher membership numbers and online access objectives and was therefore appropriate. The interviewee noted that this advice gave her the confidence to go back to the contractor and say ‘carry on

with the stated specification', something she admits she would not have been able to do without Communities 2.0's advice and support.

Even so, there was some suggestion of displacement of private sector providers: in particular, one of the larger social enterprises had withdrawn from a long-standing contract with a private IT consultancy having recruited a staff member with the support of the Programme, while at least one of the good practice organisations also argued that they would have had to procure support from the private sector in the absence of the Programme:

'There was a need for a better web-site – it needed to be more user friendly from both our point of view (management of data) and for the external user viewing the web-site.'

7.2.2 Support to Organisations and Digital Inclusion

In terms of the other main reason for supporting voluntary and community organisations, and to a lesser extent, social enterprises – that is, to use them as a way of accessing digitally excluded people – our first wave interviews with the first cohort of organisations in 2011 suggested that this had played a very modest role in terms of broader digital inclusion and this was confirmed by our second wave interviews in 2013 (with 17 of the organisations).

In the two cases where the organisations first interviewed in 2011 were delivering digital initiatives (i.e. where the purpose of the support was focused on providing skills and confidence in using ICT), it was clear that the projects we had visited had largely been successful in meeting their targets (in each case supporting more than 300 beneficiaries) and in both cases, their work had morphed relatively seamlessly into new County-wide digital initiatives which were building on the contacts and good practice developed in the earlier phase.

In addition, one organisation which had received a package of support between our first and second visits, had included a strand of digital inclusion

activities and within this organisation, volunteers had delivered training sessions to around 80 beneficiaries with no previous IT experience.

Elsewhere however, there was little evidence of organisations being used as a way of accessing new potential beneficiaries. In one case, an organisation with a large, mostly elderly volunteer base, where in 2011 plans were afoot to hold a series of taster sessions, these had started but had been stopped early because of lack of take-up, even though the manager was full of praise for the way in which Communities 2.0 had structured the session:

‘one or two of the sessions went ahead... We had about five or six volunteers turn up to the first session...- [The Communities 2.0 trainer] made it a really fun session [but] ...we had trouble filling the sessions so we decided to call it a day. Since then, we’ve not really moved on with anything to do with digital inclusion – even though it’s part of the brief.’

In another organisation, basic ICT training had been laid on for members of a group, but only three people had been involved. In other voluntary and community organisations, the only contact since the 2011 interview had been with one or two key staff members.

In practice, then, it would appear that for the majority of these organisations at least, there has been little ‘follow through’ from the assistance in meeting the group’s own organisational needs to the digital inclusion agenda – even though this had been tried.

By contrast, there was clearly a stronger focus in the 2013 cohort than in 2011 on using the work with voluntary and community organisations as a way of developing new digital inclusion activities targeted at individuals – whether staff, volunteers, clients or the general public - who were digitally excluded. In all, Communities 2.0 involvement had led to digital inclusion activities targeting those with little or no experience of IT in around ten of the 14 voluntary/community groups in the 2013 sample. In some cases, these had led to the engagement of a significant number of people for example:

- One voluntary organisation had been assisted to access Lottery funding for a digital inclusion project which had exceeded its targets;
- A housing association had delivered a very successful 'digital initiative' project, targeting older residents on one of its large estates, which had now been taken forward by a County-wide initiative supported by Communities 2.0;
- A third organisation had also been engaged in delivering two 'computer clubs' for existing and potential volunteers with the organisation. where older people and those who were unemployed could come along to learn very basic level computer skills designed to allow them to volunteer and complete basic tasks e.g. shop on-line or send e-mails
- A fourth organisation had seen between 20 and 30 staff and key volunteers with very mixed ICT skills engaged in training delivered as part of the Programme, and Communities 2.0 had also provided taster sessions at a training day attended by more than 70 individuals: in all this organisation believed it had engaged around 150 individuals.

The second round of interviews with these organisations suggested, however, that only in a few of these organisations had these digital inclusion activities been sustained.

Moreover, the attempt to 'read across' from organisational support to digital inclusion activities was less true (understandably perhaps) of the social enterprises in the 2013 sample, where (with one exception) the support was focused exclusively on resolving problems and providing equipment, resources or training related to the core activities of the organisation – even though in two cases, where the organisations worked with a significant number of people thought to have low ICT skills, there might have been an opportunity to use the support as a lever to wider digital inclusion activities.

Interestingly, none of the eight additional good practice case-studies had involved developing 'digital inclusion' strategies as such, and this probably reflects the dominance within this sample of social enterprises. However, in

one of these cases – a residents’ association in a sheltered housing complex – the focus of the intervention had been on enabling residents to use donated ICT equipment and to access the internet, via a mix of technical support and training activities (harnessing both the Communities 2.0 area team and some of the digital initiatives). In another case a trust with a large membership argued that its use of social media was leading to a greater engagement of its members with ICT, while in another two organisations, volunteers had received training in using new hardware and software acquired with the support or encouragement of the Programme.

7.2.3 Satisfaction with the Support to Organisations

In terms of the service provided, our fieldwork in 2013 and 2014 revealed strong evidence of the very high regard for the support provided by Communities 2.0, with all but three of the 29 organisations interviewed for the first time taking the view that the support was excellent or very good.

Interestingly, this included several social enterprises which had in the end decided not to go ahead with the recommendations from the ICT Review, because it believed they were ‘way too ambitious’ and (even with a funding package) unaffordable. Typical comments here were:

(from a group which had been helped to access funding to run a digital inclusion initiative) ‘they took a lead in preparing the application and overall I would say the thing that stands out was that they really got themselves involved, especially with things like in facilitating partnership meetings, providing feedback.’

(about an ICT review) ‘The report was excellent. The advice we had, the recommendations in the report were excellent, just what we were looking for.’

(Of applying for funding via the Programme) ‘it was so easy, so simple’ and ‘our experience was seamless’

(Of ongoing support) 'you can text him [the broker] or e-mail or phone any time ... without his help, I don't know what I would have done'.

(Of applying for a package of support) 'we were very satisfied and it was a smooth process.'

(In general terms) 'we are satisfied and thankful that the support is there.'

Another interviewee commended Communities 2.0 staff for delivering training at the right level for each individual in a group even when people within the group had disparate abilities.

Only one organisation was strongly dissatisfied: as noted above, in this case, a small voluntary organisation which had received Community Enterprise Development funding for a year to enable it to develop its trading activities, reported that it had been told no support could be provided to upgrade its website to enable e-Commerce. A number of other organisations though generally satisfied had some reservations:

- one was irritated by the fact they had been given wrong advice on VAT liabilities;
- another noted that the fact the website the organisation had acquired thanks to the Programme used Joomla as opposed to WordPress as a platform had reduced its flexibility;
- four (two of them good practice organisations) reported that there had been delays in support coming on stream
- two felt the paperwork associated with the package of support received was unreasonably demanding and another had decided not to proceed because they regarded the administrative burden as excessive:
'It quickly became obvious we were looking at a website which would cost no more than £7K and thus, at most, we might have got a grant of £3.5K – there would be a similar number of meetings for a much larger grant...The net benefit would have been about £300'.

Turning to the findings from the follow up interviews, with 33 of the organisations, undertaken around 18 months after the first wave of interviews, these suggested that engagement from Communities 2.0 was rarely sustained.

In terms of on-going contact or support from the Programme, over half (18) had had no or only minimal contact or support with the Programme over the intervening period, though many were still very positive about the support which they had received at the time¹⁰¹. Some however, felt that continued contact might have been valuable with one, a social enterprise, commenting that 'we seem to have lost contact' and that it would have been good if 'it had been there a bit longer ... just a call every six months' and another, which had had support in setting up an internet café in a community facility, regretting that there had not been ongoing support from the Programme on how to deliver a project whilst utilising the new equipment.

In five, activities which were underway when we undertook the previous fieldwork had been completed or taken forward (in the case of one social enterprise and one voluntary organisation, by applying for and accessing packages of support) and in two of these there had also been some on-going support. In three other cases, where the original organisation had either become or had been succeeded by County-wide digital inclusion initiatives, there had been intensive engagement with Communities 2.0, which had helped to drive these forward, while in the remaining cases there was limited ongoing contact. Interestingly, in the one organisation initially interviewed in 2013 which had been strongly critical of the Programme, another individual had become involved as a volunteer and had taken charge of the organisation's website, and had received additional support from the Programme which was strongly welcomed.

¹⁰¹ Programme staff pointed out that while the intention was to keep in contact with assisted organisations, the high numbers of organisations provided with direct support (1,558 in total) meant that it was decided to deliver ongoing support only where requested by the organisation itself, although those in receipt of financial support were assisted throughout the period during which funds were being drawn down.

For those where contact since the initial intervention had been very limited, in some cases, this was because they felt they had no need for further support, either because they now had access to other sources of expertise (for example, a community initiative which now had links with a FE college which not only ran classes in its centre but also maintained the equipment, a charitable training company which had now diversified into providing ICT training and had its own in-house capacity to resolve issues and a housing association which now ran its own digital inclusion activities, supported by a County-wide digital initiative) or, more commonly, because ICT issues were currently a lower priority because the organisation had got what it needed (most often, a website) as a result of earlier engagement. Thus, in one community organisation, run by volunteers, the Programme had created a basic website which was updated (albeit infrequently) by the Chair and which was seen as a way of communicating with a wider group than the regular members.

Generally, even where there had been no or minimal contact, the picture of broad (but not universal) satisfaction with what the Programme had done to help these organisations remained at the time of the second interview.

Moreover, those organisations which had had continued support generally rated this highly. One community group, for example, emphasised that the assistance in brokering discussions with a website designer who had offered to update the website as a volunteer but who was 'an unknown quantity' was of critical importance in ensuring a successful outcome. Similarly, a group which had suffered the problems with an update of a website initially designed with the support of the Programme was full of praise for the way in which Communities 2.0 staff had come to the rescue, as well as reporting that a server acquired as the main element of the package of support which had been developed after the 2011 fieldwork had made a significant difference to the organisation:

'We're more secure, better organised and generally on a better footing'

7.2.4 Stakeholder Views of Organisational Support

Turning to the perceptions of stakeholders about the support provided to organisations, national stakeholders tended to report that the feedback from third sector organisations themselves was almost entirely positive.

Staff and stakeholders within Communities 2.0 tended to emphasise that during Phase 2 there had been a much stronger emphasis not just on meeting the expressed needs of organisations which had been supported (which often were short term and related to specific things which needed fixing) but on a) identifying longer-term needs in terms of ICT and options to meet these through the ICT review; b) facilitating the development of skills to manage ICT within supported organisations and c) where possible identifying ways in which the organisation could contribute to wider digital inclusion activities. Indeed, some interviewees suggested that Communities 2.0 staff often found themselves in a position where they had a clearer view of an organisation's needs than those themselves involved in managing the organisation.

At the same time, there had been a stronger focus on training (with the original emphasis on access to online resources replaced by more formal residential training) quality assurance and peer review of Circuit Riders' work on ICT Reviews:

'before the temptation was always to make suggestions based on your own personal strengths and interests. Now you look at the problem from the organisation's overall perspective, what is in its best interest. That usually means offering a wider number of ideas and options even if you have to back to other circuit riders to get more information or get their views on an option'. (Staff focus group contributor)

This would certainly appear to be borne out by the much stronger focus on the ICT Review in organisations interviewed for the first time during the second phase (see above) and also perhaps in the fact that quite a few of the case-study organisations had not implemented in full the recommendations from the Review.

Staff and some other stakeholders expressed frustration with what was often seen as an arbitrary distinction made within the Programme's Business Plan (and attributed to the Welsh Government and WEFO) between the voluntary and community organisations (which were entitled to assistance from the project, including through the ICT Review) and social enterprises (which were eligible for financial support through packages of support). At the worst, this could lead to organisations being incentivised to present themselves as social enterprises in order to receive financial support, even though this fitted ill with their fundamental aims and values. More generally, it was argued, this had led to frustration on the part of some voluntary and community organisations who received advice but lacked the means to operationalise it. These stakeholders tended to argue that at the most Communities 2.0 had provided only a partial and temporary solution to the problems faced by the third sector – where large numbers of organisations were, for example, using PCs with XP as the operating system even though this was no longer supported by Microsoft – rather than achieving any sort of transformational change.

Staff and to some extent national stakeholders also tended to be more critical than organisations which had received help themselves about the processes around 'packages of support' (though as we have seen some organisations which were eligible for support had not taken this forward). Staff in the focus groups reported that many organisations had decided not to take forward applications for packages of support, even after significant work had been undertaken on them, and argued that the effort required to complete applications was disproportionate to the financial benefit – particularly as other generic sources of grant funding which could include ICT equipment were often said to be available, with far less onerous processes.

'I've spent more or less two months solid working with one group just to get a grant of £1,800' (Staff focus group contributor)

'Giving money away has been quite difficult', we've had to put lots of effort into it' (National stakeholder)

On this basis, a handful of stakeholders suggested that it would make much better sense to integrate financial support for ICT development for social enterprises with business support schemes targeted either at social enterprises or all micro-enterprises, though others suggested that Communities 2.0 had set an example by putting in place rigorous processes in terms of the assessment of assisted organisations' business plans.

Staff and national stakeholders were also generally fairly sceptical about the extent to which the work with organisations had enabled the Programme to mobilise the sector to act as an agent of digital inclusion, even though most recognised that Communities 2.0 had made very serious efforts to try to do this. Few interviewees could identify examples of assisted organisations (apart from those who were engaged in digital initiatives) adopting or delivering digital inclusion strategies and a number of interviewees from within the partners delivering the Programme thought that the whole approach was based on a misconception. Thus one interviewee argued that most third sector organisations that the Programme had worked with were just too small and lacking in resources to themselves promote digital inclusion of members, volunteers and clients (though they could be used to signpost people to provision) while another argued that the concept of using the third sector as a ladder for digitally excluded people had proved flawed.

‘There was a conveyor belt theory – this didn’t really happen – the flow doesn’t work’ (National stakeholder)

By contrast, perhaps, local stakeholders responding to the web-survey were more upbeat. The vast majority of these local stakeholders believed that Communities 2.0 had provided good quality support to community groups and social enterprises, as shown by Table 16.

Table 16: Appropriateness, Quality and Timeliness of Support from Communities 2.0 to Voluntary and Community Organisations and Social Enterprises

	Numbers		
	Appropriateness	Quality	Timeliness
Very Good	22	21	18
Good	11	12	13
Neither Good nor Poor	6	6	5
Poor	0	0	1
Very Poor	1	1	1
Don't Know	9	9	11

Source: Web-Survey of Partner Organisations (base=50)

More than half of those able to comment thought that the support was very good in terms of its appropriateness and quality, with marginally fewer having the same view of its timeliness. Only two respondents had an adverse view of the Programme's performance in any of these respects.

In terms of specific aspects of the support offered by Communities 2.0 to voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises, again around or more than half those able to comment gave the highest rating to the three different aspects considered (although around a quarter of respondents did not know), as shown in Table 17.

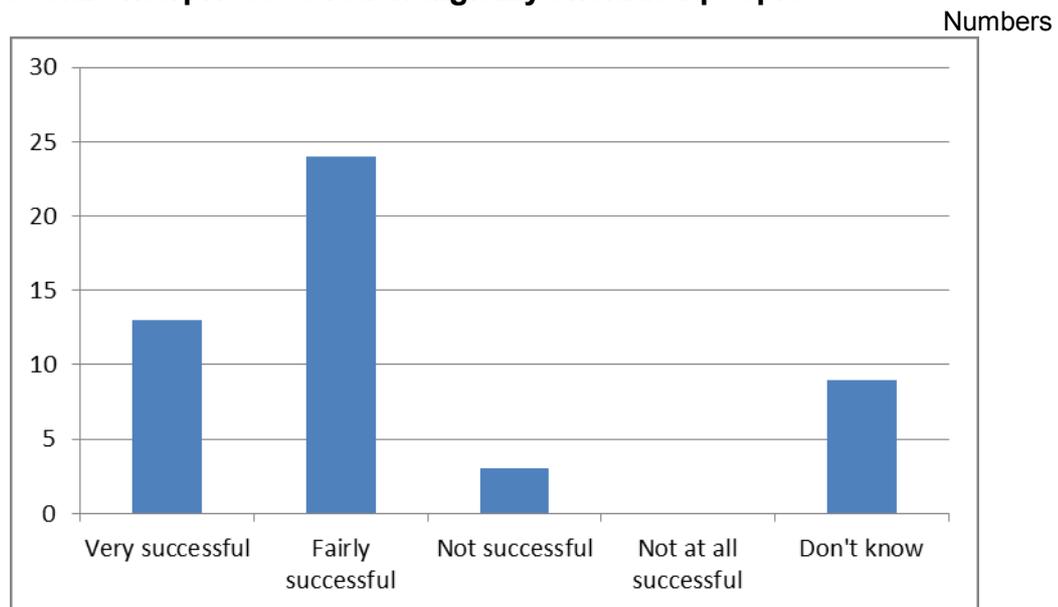
Table 17: Effectiveness of types of support offered by Communities 2.0

	Numbers		
	Train the trainer provision for staff or volunteers	Helping community groups make effective use of technology	Providing community groups' with technical advice
Very effective	20	21	16
Fairly effective	13	15	15
Not particularly effective	3	1	2
Not at all effective	0	0	0
Don't know	12	12	14

Source: Web-Survey of Partner Organisations (base=50)

Local stakeholders also took the view (to some extent in contrast to the findings of our fieldwork) that the Programme had been generally successful at using voluntary and community organisations as a good way to reach digitally excluded individuals, as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The success of Communities 2.0 in using community groups and social enterprises to reach digitally excluded people



Source: Web survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

7.3 Nature of Support Provided to Individuals and Satisfaction with the Support

7.3.1 Scale and Nature of the Support: Stakeholder Views

Fieldwork with staff and stakeholders as well as with our digital initiative case-studies provided a generally positive view of the achievements of the project in terms of the – increasingly important – work to support digitally excluded individuals.

As already noted, stakeholders generally believed that the project had done well to reach so many individuals – whether through its own activities or through the digital initiatives which it had funded.

The digital initiatives were widely perceived by staff and stakeholders as particularly successful albeit that they had inevitably varied significantly in terms of delivery model.

‘they’ve worked really well, they’ve got some sustainability out of it ... even in cases where there isn’t sustainability they’ve worked with a tremendous number of people’ (Staff focus group contributor)

Programme staff were perceived both by national stakeholders and by digital initiative case-study interviewees as having played a crucial role in underpinning the digital initiatives: brokers had often played a key role in bringing together partnerships and developing the original applications, while Programme staff also cascaded ‘train the trainer’ training down through the initiatives:

‘[it’s been important to] train trainers within the initiatives, to train others to deliver digital inclusion. Better than us keeping the knowledge and skills, we were handing it over to organisations all across Wales, therefore, embedding it in the organisations running the initiatives’ (National stakeholder)

All but two (B, E) of our five case-studies had succeeded or seemed almost certain to succeed in reaching its targets for individuals assisted – even though these were generally thought to be stretching – with another (which had already come to an end) (B) coming within a whisker of the target on the WCC’s figures, which the lead partner thought were under-stated. In some of these case-studies the extent of the delivery was truly impressive: for example, in one case-study (A) a single member of staff had, over a little over a year delivered a total of 98 courses involving 316 sessions (a mix of drop-ins and more formal First Click courses) at JobCentres, libraries, community centres and community organisations own premises, reaching 922 individuals against a total budget of less than £100k for a two-year project. In another (C), one individual volunteer (admittedly an exception) had clocked up 700 hours of delivery.

Many stakeholders and case-study interviewees highlighted the importance of the fact that sessions provided under Communities 2.0 (including those in the last year which were delivered by mainstream learning providers as part of the National Programme) and the digital initiatives were informal and delivered at community locations such as libraries and community centres rather than in formal learning environments: this was thought to encourage participation by those who had a negative experience of school. In this context, while some stakeholders reported successful delivery of sessions to Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants at JobCentres, quite a few interviewees highlighted the fact that there had been some issues over participants perceiving that they were obliged to take part in training, and that Communities 2.0 staff had had to work hard to counteract this, stressing the wider benefits of being able to use ICT effectively.

Stakeholder interviewees and the case-studies also highlighted the fact that the nature of 'provision' varied widely, not just between different areas but within them. Thus in one case-study area (C), it was possible to find both more structured courses, either based on the BBC First Click materials or on materials originated by Communities 2.0 itself, informal drop-in sessions, often using libraries, where people were encouraged to come along with problems, including with their own equipment, and very informal activities designed to make ICT seem fun such as Wii Challenges, as well as attempts to build the awareness of front-line staff e.g. in housing providers.

In another (D), where the lead partner was a housing association, the digital initiative involved a wide range of different activities including:

- Taster sessions
- Delivering 'First Click for jobseekers' type support related to Work
- Developing Volunteer Coaches
- Training of frontline staff
- Home seeker and Home swapper sessions
- Silver Surfer Get Online sessions

- Informal open access drop in sessions for families, with Nintendo Wiis for the children
- Digital Inclusion Drop In sessions covering issues such as online security and safety, saving money online, websites to help with kids homework, sending emails as well as how to access public authority services online and complete benefit applications online

In the other geographical case-studies, delivery (A and B) was again a mix of informal drop in provision and more structured courses, often based around First Click, spread over four or five weeks.

However, as already noted, many stakeholders highlighted the fact that in phase 2, the focus had been much more clearly on getting people to use the internet, regardless of whether the approach to this had been direct or indirect.

‘For phase 2, the focus went from getting you engaged in technology to actually getting you on-line. Our targets didn’t change but the Welsh Government put a greater emphasis on getting people on-line, rather than getting people to do something with technology, like digital story telling’. (Staff focus group contributor)

Most stakeholders thought this mix of different approaches worked very well, with many stressing the importance of an approach of ‘finding the hook that will get people interested ... so they can see how it might be of use to them’.

Some argued that it was misleading to believe that the success or otherwise of an intervention could be judged by the amount of time it took: one interviewee argued for example that spending 10 minutes with an older person at the Communities 2.0 stand in the Eisteddfod and demonstrating how they could use a tablet to Skype relatives could have more effect in the right circumstances (for instance, where the individual had grandchildren who could help if they got stuck) than someone attending a four week First Click course.

However, a minority of stakeholders argued that Communities 2.0 was arguably too ready to count participants who had benefited from only very marginal intervention, with one or two noting that the threshold for support was significantly less than was used by Citizens Online in its Get IT Together pilots, where a minimum of four hours of contact was required. At least one stakeholder argued that 20,000 was probably a more accurate measure of the number of individuals who had interacted with the Programme in a meaningful way than the total recorded on the database.

Perhaps more seriously, quite a number of staff and stakeholders argued that the drive to hit targets had led to the Programme sometimes to target 'low hanging fruit', with the result that the residual population who remained digitally excluded would be proportionately more difficult to reach. Thus, one argued that the Programme to date had 'probably been most successful in getting to those that are easier to engage ... the quarter of the community that go down to the local community centre' while a number of interviewees highlighted the fact that staff from the Programme and from digital initiatives had generally not been able anywhere to work within the home (because of concerns about insurance, safety and lack of access to Wi-Fi), thus excluding many of the most vulnerable and socially excluded people, who were housebound because of age, ill-health or low levels of confidence: while there had been attempts e.g. via projects with Care and Repair and Age Cymru these were relatively limited in scale and intensity.

At the same time, case-study interviewees almost always argued that the informal approach of the digital initiatives attracted a very different sort of participant to those which a more formal learning approach would have generated. Thus in one case-study (B) staff involved in delivering the digital initiative argued strongly that while the local College offered IT courses, these were not suitable to Communities 2.0 target groups because they were a) accredited courses e.g. ECDL which did just not appeal to their beneficiaries; b) costly; c) only available on academic term basis and d) not delivered by tutors who could empathise with the circumstances of target groups. In another case-study (A), staff working in social housing argued that many of

those who had participated in sessions were elderly or not particularly mobile and had been initially dismissive of the idea of attending any sort of training: it was highly unlikely that this sort of participants would have been willing to attend more formal provision. In a third area (C), drop-in provision at libraries was seen as providing appropriate support in a non-threatening environment, that particularly appealed to older people and to children and their parents, and that bridged the gap between the sort of help which library staff might be able to provide unaided and formal learning which would be off-putting to many:

‘we [libraries] can provide IT support for residents but we can’t take them on a journey, particularly those with deeper needs’ (Case-study interviewee).

In terms of the four target groups of the population, almost all those of the stakeholders and case-study interviewees who were able to comment thought that there had been good progress in respect of older people (for whom the arrival of tablets was seen as really important) and job-seekers (where the stick of needing to demonstrate use of the UJM website had clearly helped), but many thought that progress in terms of the disabled had been much more patchy. While examples of good or excellent practice were highlighted - for instance, work with the Bargoed Deaf Club – many thought that the specialist requirements of dealing with different adaptive technologies and understanding the specific needs of different groups had made it particularly difficult to ‘cascade’ skills (e.g. to library staff), meaning that Communities 2.0 staff were often themselves involved in direct delivery which inevitably put severe constraints on the ‘reach’ of the Programme and meant that ‘the unit costs have been extraordinarily expensive’ (National stakeholder).

In terms of those in social housing, there appeared to be very different views from different interviewees, several of whom pointed out that Communities 2.0 did not report separately on the number of assisted participants who lived in social housing. Several stakeholders felt that the response from different Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) had been very patchy, with some fully embracing the digital inclusion message (and for instance, routinely ensuring

free Wi-Fi was available in sheltered housing schemes) and others doing little more than paying lip-service to it, while a more general view was that a huge limitation was the general lack of access to Wi-Fi on social housing estates. It was widely noted that many tenants - including many who in principle had access to tablets or smartphones – were unable because of poor credit ratings to get contracts to have personal Wi-Fi access themselves, even if they could afford it, while some interviewees were very critical of RSLs failure to progress any sort of communal or area-based Wi-Fi outside of sheltered housing schemes. A small number of interviewees argued that the evidence from the National Survey that social housing tenants were even less likely to have access to the internet than tenants in private rented housing spoke volumes for the lack of real engagement with this issue by RSLs. At the same time, one of our case-study digital initiatives (D) was led by a housing association and was generally deemed to have been very successful in supporting tenants to access support.

More generally, stakeholders and those interviewed for the case-studies pointed to the cost and availability of internet access being a significant issue for many of those targeted or supported by Communities 2.0, given that libraries and commercial premises with free Wi-Fi could be difficult to access from deprived communities in the Valleys or rural Wales. By contrast, the cost of equipment was widely seen as less of an issue, particularly with the advent of cheap tablets and smartphones, although examples were cited of good practice in terms of working with providers of refurbished kit to provide access to low cost equipment for participants in Communities 2.0 provision in at least one of the case-study areas (C) and elsewhere.

Stakeholder and case-study interviewees often highlighted the key role of volunteers, particularly in delivering digital initiatives, with the Programme having trained nearly 600 volunteers by its close. While at the time of the Interim Evaluation the recruitment and retention of volunteers was seen as problematic, there appears to have been greater success during phase 2, largely by devolving volunteer management to the digital initiatives. Recruiting and supporting volunteers to assist or undertake direct delivery of drop-in

sessions or training was a key feature of all but one (E) of our case-study digital initiatives: in this latter case, the intention had been to recruit trainers from within partner organisations but this had proved far more challenging than expected. Across the other four case-studies, project staff reported a total of around 130 volunteers who had been recruited with a view to delivering support to individuals, although in most cases the pool of active volunteers was significantly smaller. In some areas (particularly C, and to a lesser extent A and D), such volunteers were themselves delivering sessions without any input from paid staff.

More generally, stakeholders cited the development of a volunteer cadre as a major success. The provision of more structured training and 'train the trainer' training led by PAVS was widely seen as being important here.

While it might be thought that using volunteers (particularly where, as in several case-study areas, these were left to deliver drop-in provision or courses on their own, without the presence of paid staff) carried risks in terms of quality, several stakeholders believed that using volunteers not only enabled greater 'reach' but also helped in terms of building a rapport with participants. In particular, it was argued that using jobseekers as volunteers had huge benefits not only in terms of building the skills and confidence of the individuals who were volunteering, but also in terms of a 'demonstration effect' to those they supported. Similarly, recruiting older retired individuals as volunteers was seen to reassure some participants, who might otherwise believe that a young professional might not really understand their lack of confidence.

While most interviewees were highly positive about the use of volunteers to deliver support to individuals, a handful argued that the overhead of training and managing them, particularly given the fact that younger unemployed volunteers had a high rate of turnover (albeit for the positive reason that they often managed to move into employment) meant that it was uneconomic. While this was very much a minority view, there was much wider agreement

that it could not be assumed that a volunteer workforce was sustainable without support or replenishment.

While as already noted there was widespread agreement that the focus of activity vis-à-vis individuals during the second phase of the Programme had been on access to the internet, there was some disagreement as to whether the Programme had been too focused on simply getting people online, rather than developing ICT skills and the capacity to use the internet with confidence and appropriately. Many interviewees argued that digital inclusion/exclusion was not binary: securing digital inclusion was about more than just showing someone how to access the internet. Some of these felt that the Programme had recognised this and had done good work, for example in ensuring that job seekers not only used the UJM website but used it effectively. Others felt that the drive to achieve high numbers of participant had perhaps reduced the focus on building skills and confidence.

‘Having the technology available to you is not the same as having the skills to use the internet. Everyone’s got smart phone. But are they using them to access public services information? Do they have the basic skills alongside the IT skills to get the most out of the internet?’
(National stakeholder)

However, our digital initiative case-studies suggested that practitioners recognised the importance not just of getting people online but of giving them the skills to use the internet effectively. Interviewees from one lead partner (B) noted that although the minimum engagement required by Communities 2.0 to include a participant on the database was two hours, in practice most of those they had worked with had engaged over significantly longer and echoed the point that claims by individuals that they had some digital skills could not always be taken at face value, which argued for not focusing exclusively on those who perceived themselves as non-users of the internet:

‘we had some turn up who told us yes, they did have an e-mail, but when you actually went in to their e-mail accounts all they had there was a welcome message ... they didn’t have a clue how to use it. Now

if you had not allowed those to turn up, well...’ (Case-study interviewee)

Turning to the local stakeholders responding to the web-survey, these generally reported that activities laid on by the Programme had been effective (Table 18).

Table 18: The effectiveness of activities for individual beneficiaries

	Numbers	
	Taster sessions or workshops for beneficiaries	In-depth ICT related training for beneficiaries
Very effective	25	20
Fairly effective	18	18
Not particularly effective	1	2
Not at all effective	2	2
Don't know	4	8

Source: Web Survey of Partner Organisations (Base 50)

In terms of the target groups, a large majority of respondents believed that the Programme had been successful in engaging participants from all four of the groups, albeit that somewhat fewer were confident that it had been successful with disabled people (32 respondents) and with social housing residents (34 respondents) than with unemployed people and older people (38 respondents in each case): the difference here was, however, in the proportion of respondents who were not able to comment, rather than in the proportion who felt the Programme had been unsuccessful, although it is notable that only three respondents felt that the Programme had been unsuccessful in relation to job-seekers.

Finally, respondents were asked an open question as to what aspects of Communities 2.0 had been particularly successful at reaching digitally excluded people.

11 respondents thought that libraries had played a key part in the Programme, as they were local, community venues easily accessible to all, with two of

these highlighting drop-in sessions run at libraries as particularly successful. In addition, several other respondents said community-based approaches, including delivery training via community groups, had been successful. Five respondents thought the 'extensive volunteer Programme' had been another success of Communities 2.0, with one citing the 'structured training and support' from Communities 2.0 as a reason for this success. Training was also highlighted as a success by several respondents, although one specific type of training activity did not emerge as being more successful than another.

Examples of successes cited by less than five respondents were partnership working (four respondents), funding for activities (four), working with JCP to enable people to search for jobs online (four), the use of the First Click resources (three) and outreach working (three).

7.3.2 Targeting and Nature of the Support to Individuals

Turning to the findings of our surveys with individuals, and taking the data from all three first wave surveys (undertaken in 2011, 2013 and 2014) together, it would appear that the Programme did well in terms of reaching the appropriate target group.

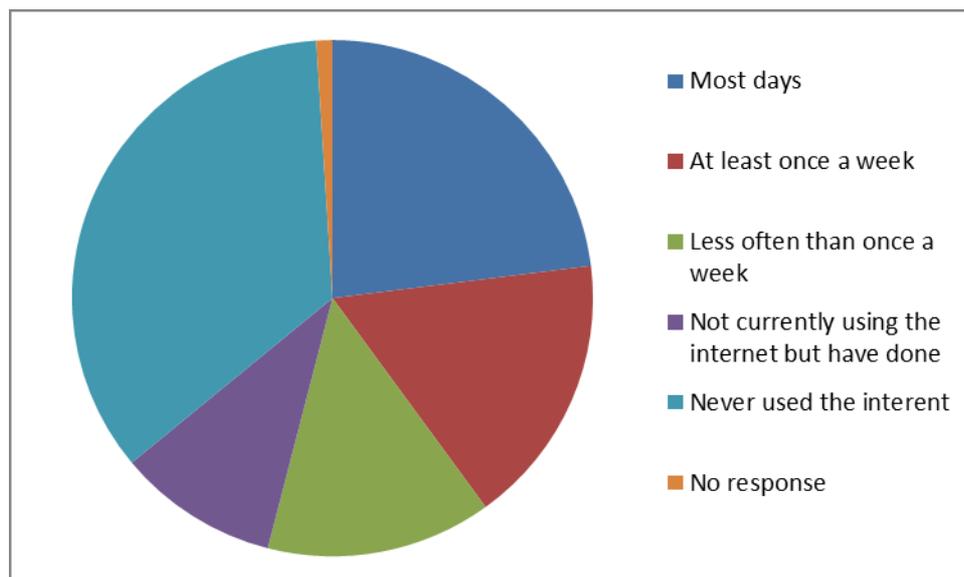
Overall, just over a third of respondents (200 or 35 per cent) reported that they did not have access to the internet at home (significantly above the national average revealed by the National Survey, even taking the age profile of the respondents into account¹⁰²).

As shown by Figures 6 and 7, 46 per cent of all respondents (260) and 60 per cent (143) of respondents over the age of 65 said that they did not personally use the internet at the time of joining the Programme. Of those that did not, only a minority had ever used the internet (57 or 27 per cent of non-users), meaning that 203 (or 36 per cent) had never used the internet. The split between users and non-users was very similar across all three cohorts.

¹⁰² With 42 per cent being aged 65+.

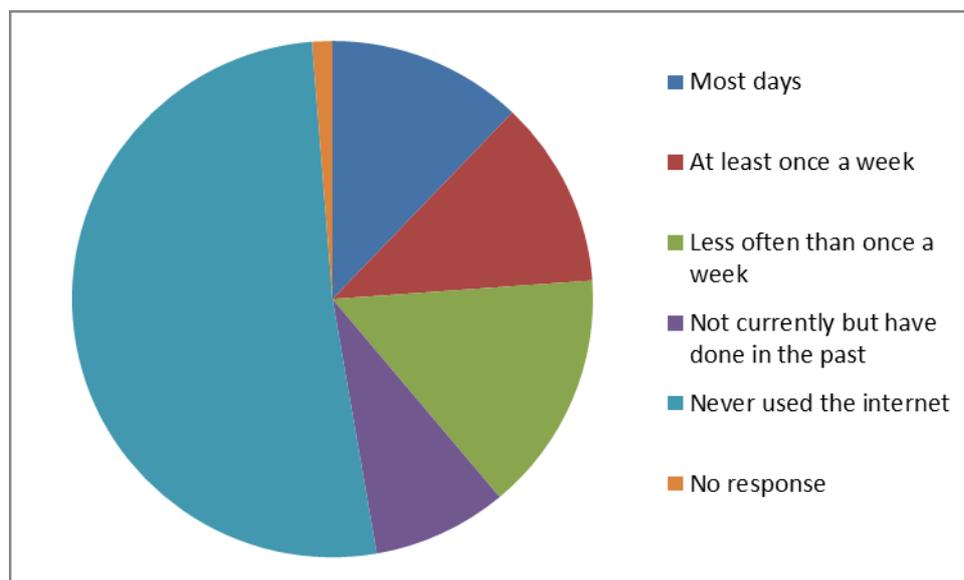
However, across the sample as a whole, most of those who did use the internet were fairly regular users, with only a quarter (79 or 25 per cent of users) using the internet less than once a week (though this proportion was higher – at 39 per cent of users for those aged 65 and above), although it is interesting to note that there were significant differences between the three different cohorts in this regard: in the 2011 cohort, 18 per cent of users reported that they used the internet less than once a week, whereas the equivalent figures for the 2013 and 2014 cohorts were 33 per cent and 23 per cent respectively, despite the fact that the 2011 cohort was on average significantly older than the later cohorts. Particularly given the continued rise of internet use over the period, this suggests better targeting on those most digitally excluded as the Programme progressed.

Figure 6: Prior use of the internet by survey respondents



Source: Telephone Survey of 571 beneficiaries

Figure 7: Prior use of the internet by survey respondents aged 65 and over



Source: Telephone survey of 239 respondents aged 65 and over

More generally, over half of all respondents described their experience of computers and IT before participation as none (156 or 27 per cent) or 'hardly any at all' (140 or 25 per cent): again, perhaps counter-intuitively, it was the first 2011 cohort who were most likely to say that they had some experience of computers and IT and the 2014 cohort who were least likely to do so, again suggesting that the Programme targeted participants even more appropriately than in its early stages and that the digital initiatives were particularly successful in this regard.

Asked about the nature of their participation with Communities 2.0, the vast majority of respondents (490 or 86 per cent) said that they had participated in 'basic computer courses'¹⁰³, with other options each being selected by five per cent or less of respondents (see Table 19)

¹⁰³ Respondents could select multiple responses

Table 19: Types of activities involved in

Activity	Number	Percentage
Basic computer course (e.g. Word Processing, E-mail, the Internet)	490	86
Other	119	21
Social media	28	5
Digital photography	22	4
Skype	18	3
Digital storytelling	15	3
Film making	7	1
Mobile phone courses	2	-

Source: Telephone survey of participants in 2011, 2013 and 2014 (base 571)

As will be seen, more than a fifth of respondents said they had taken part in other activities. Asked for more information about what this involved, by far the most common response related to support with job-search or UJM, with at least 48 individuals (8 per cent) mentioning this. Other responses included:

- Help with iPad (10 responses)
- Photoshop (seven responses)
- Spam/security (six responses)
- Creating websites (four responses)
- Ebay/online shopping (four responses)

8.0 Findings: Evidence on Outcomes and Impact

8.1 Introduction

In this Section, we consider evidence on outcomes for organisations – in terms of changes to their use of ICT, of performance and financial sustainability and in terms of creating and sustaining employment – and for individuals – in terms of increasing their confidence and competence in using the internet and ICT more generally and in terms of buttressing their employability and financial and social well-being. We turn first, however, to the important question of whether the Programme has succeeded in changing attitudes and approaches of public sector partners to digital inclusion.

Key Findings

Although somewhat limited, available evidence suggests that Communities 2.0 played an important role in raising awareness of digital inclusion across the third and public sectors and made a contribution to the development of on line delivery of services by the public sector.

The longer-term impact of support to voluntary and community organisations and to social enterprises was more limited. While Communities 2.0 placed a strong emphasis on not just providing advice to and resolving problems for supported organisations but also on building their capacity to manage ICT themselves, the longitudinal work in particular suggested that it may be unrealistic to believe that a one-off intervention can make an enduring difference to small organisations, while significant economic impacts were generally not found in assisted organisations.

In terms of individual beneficiaries, our survey work suggested that participation in the Programme had a significant and sustained impact on the extent to which beneficiaries made use of the internet for a wide range of purposes.

The positive effect was particularly visible for older beneficiaries, whose engagement with the internet post-participation was very significantly above that of the older population as a whole, as captured by the National Survey .

Between a quarter and a third of beneficiaries interviewed for a second time had gone on to do further learning connected to ICT. Given the demographic profile of beneficiaries, employment outcomes were always likely to be limited, but more than a quarter of the small number of second-wave interviewees who were in employment thought that participation in Communities 2.0 had assisted them in securing their current employment.

The positive view of the impact of the Programme on individual beneficiaries suggested by our telephone survey was strongly echoed by evidence from stakeholders and the digital initiative case-studies.

8.2 Impact on Awareness of Digital Inclusion and the Delivery of Services

We have already noted in Chapter 3 a consensus view that digital inclusion has assumed increasing importance on the Welsh policy agenda, not least due to the focus on moving government services – above all, access to welfare benefits – online and severe costs pressure within the public sector.

However, stakeholders and the digital initiative case-studies suggested that Communities 2.0 itself helped to stimulate greater awareness of the need to address digital inclusion on the part of both the public and third sectors, both as way of supporting the most vulnerable in society and as a way of enabling services to be delivered more effectively online.

‘C2.0 has really brokered links and partnerships – bringing people to the table who have never worked together....shifting mindsets’
(National stakeholder)

Thus, in one of the case-study areas (C), a senior local authority interviewee believed that the advocacy of the Communities 2.0 broker had played a key role in getting the authority to focus seriously on the issue of digital inclusion, which had subsequently been highlighted within its Single Integrated Plan, by highlighting the potential negative impact of digital exclusion on the welfare of those on benefits.

Similarly, a national stakeholder argued that the commitment to a total of more than £600,000 in match-funding for digital initiatives which had been levered in from local authorities despite the squeeze on local government spending suggested the extent to which the Programme had convinced them of the importance of the agenda.

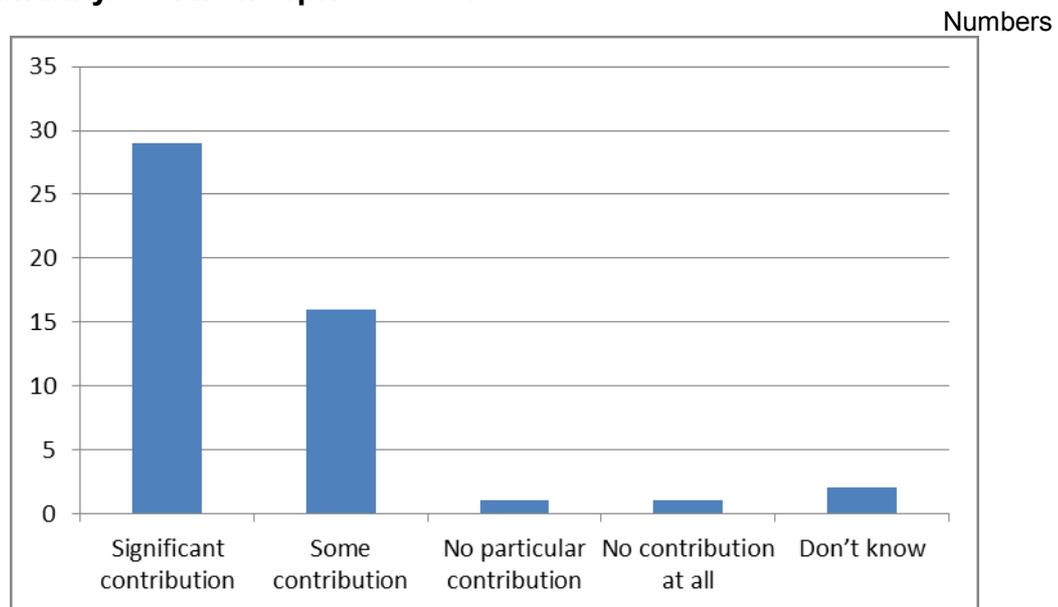
In at least three (C,D, E) of the digital initiative case-studies (led respectively by a local authority, a housing association and a third sector organisation), the involvement with Communities 2.0 was said to have led to improvements in the lead partners' use of its website and social media, and to have helped increase the share of business done online. In the case of the housing association, a digital inclusion strategy was seen as being a key part of the legacy of the digital initiative, while in the third sector organisation a Board member reported that there had been a significant increase in interest in digital inclusion and technology issues on the part of both the board and staff.

At the same time, some stakeholders argued that there had been failures as well as successes. In particular, a small number of interviewees felt that, while some of the larger third sector organisations had come on board in terms of the agenda, some CVCs and indeed the WCVA had been less engaged than might have been hoped or expected: there was not any evident pattern here, however. Similarly the response of local authorities and the WLGA was seen as patchy, despite some excellent examples of individual authorities making a significant commitment.

Local stakeholders responding to the web-survey similarly believed that the Programme had contributed to raising awareness of digital inclusion.

Almost all the respondents believed that the voluntary and community/social enterprise sector was either very or quite aware of the digital inclusion agenda (43 out of 50, with three not being able to answer) and that awareness of the agenda on the part of the sector had increased in the last two to three years (46 out of 50, with three not responding). Against this background, it was striking that almost all of the respondents also believed that Communities 2.0 had made a contribution to increasing awareness of the issue within the sector, with almost three in five saying that it had made a significant contribution (Figure 8).

Figure 8: The contribution of Communities 2.0 Programme to raising awareness of the digital inclusion agenda in the voluntary and community/social enterprise sector



Source: Web survey of Partner Organisations (base 50)

Turning to the public sector, respondents similarly attributed a reasonably significant role to Communities 2.0 in terms of raising the awareness of different parts of the public sector of digital inclusion, albeit that a significant proportion of them did not feel they had sufficient knowledge to comment (Table 20)

Table 20: The contribution of Communities 2.0 to raising awareness of the digital inclusion agenda in the public sector

	Numbers					
	Welsh Government departments	Communities First clusters	Local Authority Library services	Housing Associations	Other Local Authority departments	JobCentre Plus
Significant Contribution	14	19	22	16	7	20
Some Contribution	16	17	18	21	20	17
No particular contribution	3	1	0	1	5	2
No contribution at all	1	1	1	1	1	1
Don't know	16	10	9	10	15	10

Source: Web-survey of Partner Organisations (base=50)

Asked about the extent to which they believed Communities 2.0 had made a contribution to supporting the development of the delivery of online services by the public sector in general, just over half of respondents (26 in all) thought it had either made a significant contribution (eight respondents) or some contribution (18 respondents)¹⁰⁴. Finally, web-survey respondents were asked about the extent to which Communities 2.0 had contributed to changes in the way their own organisations delivered services digitally. In all, 36 respondents said that their organisations had made changes to the way they delivered services online, and of these, just under half said that Communities 2.0 had made a contribution to these changes (Table 21)

Table 21: The contribution of Communities 2.0 to changes in the way organisations delivered services on-line

	Numbers	
Response	Number of respondents	
Significant contribution	8	
Some contribution	9	
No particular contribution	10	
No contribution at all	7	
Don't know	2	

Source: Web-survey of local stakeholders (base=50)

¹⁰⁴ Nine said it had made no particular contribution, four no contribution at all and 11 did not know

While in some ways, these figures look less positive than many of the other responses to the survey, the fact that these refer to developments which respondents within their own organisations suggests that the Programme made a difference to the 'supply side' as well as the 'demand side' of the delivery of services online.

While few of the stakeholders and digital initiative case-study interviewees commented directly on this, in several cases, digital initiative and Communities 2.0 staff were seen to have been closely involved with the re-purposing of local authority websites to increase their accessibility and inter-activity.

8.3 Outcomes and Impacts for Organisations

We have already noted in Section 7.2 that much of the support provided to organisations was quite light touch and focused on functional and operational issues. Inevitably at the time when we undertook our first interviews (whether in 2011 or in 2013), organisations were often unable to identify significant impacts in terms of the 'bottom line', although many stressed the extent to which the support was expected to enhance operational efficiency and hence in due course buttress sustainability and relieve financial pressure.

The main purpose of undertaking the second wave interviews (in 2013 and 2014) with the randomly sampled organisations was therefore to investigate whether there had been longer-term outcomes (in terms of the sustainable use of ICT to improve the way in which organisations worked) and impacts (in terms of improved profitability and viability) from the assistance given by Communities 2.0.

8.3.1 Building the Capacity of Organisations to Manage ICT

In reality, the second wave of interviews with assisted organisations did highlight the fact that despite the focus on building capacity, support of the sort provided by Communities 2.0 was not always a long-term solution.

In at least five cases, interviewees felt that their ICT infrastructure was not adequate and, more generally – despite the focus on building capacity which we noted in the interim report¹⁰⁵ - the engagement with Communities 2.0 had clearly not left a legacy of skills or confidence to manage this. Thus,

- in one community centre, the website which had been created by Communities 2.0 and which at the time of our first interview was attributed with having increased room bookings and thus increasing turnover and financial stability, had ‘gone down’ some time ago, with no-one in the organisation having the capacity to resolve the problem;
- in another community organisation (where involvement with the Programme had been restricted to a former staff member going on training organised by Communities 2.0 rather than investment in equipment), the current manager reported that IT equipment was ‘no longer fit for purpose’, that the website was ‘in a really bad state’ and that the organisation lacked ICT skills;
- in another organisation, an attempt to update the software that provided the platform for the website (Joomla) had caused significant problems, meaning that it was updated much less frequently, though Communities 2.0 had stepped in to help recover some lost data and was now arranging refresher training;
- in a social enterprise the manager felt that while she had been given the skills to update the website, she had not been shown how to make more fundamental design changes which she now wanted to make, while in another the owner-manager had not mastered the art of updating the website and this was no longer used;

¹⁰⁵ ‘Crucially, however, this assistance to organisations is not just delivering direct support but **is** building capacity to manage ICT more efficiently and effectively and this is perceived as a key strength – and differentiator – from other support that might be available commercially’. Interim Report, p. 97

- In two other social enterprises, the arrival of more qualified IT staff had led to the results of the Communities 2.0 intervention being superseded: in one, the website provided with support of the Programme had been replaced and in another a newly arrived office manager with professional IT skills also noted that he had been surprised at what he regarded as the low level of ambition for the organisation shown in the IT review which had been carried out, for example with regard to secure data storage;
- In two other voluntary and community organisations, the interviewees noted that although others in their organisation had been trained in updating the website, in practice only they did so: and in both cases, it was felt that a new 'push' was needed: 'we're very aware of all its [the website's] various weaknesses and quirks....we'd now do it in a different way';
- In another voluntary and community organisation, a change of personnel meant that the website which had been developed was not used: the interviewee here was critical of the fact that the website developed with the support of Communities 2.0 was not bilingual and was hoping to raise funding to commission a new website from a private contractor;
- Another social enterprise also felt that the website supported by Communities 2.0 only a couple of years previously was now in need of updating or replacement, with the interviewee noting that in hindsight, they might have made different decisions regarding the type of website they commissioned but that this was not a negative reflection on C2.0, more of a sign that technology continued to develop quickly.

Of course, it needs to be recognised that for the most part, these were very small organisations, with limited (and in some cases, no) staff capacity and often with significant staff and volunteer turnover. It is also the case, of course, that rapid change within digital technologies means that ICT equipment, software and skills often have a short shelf-life and need to be renewed and updated frequently. Expecting support from the Programme to

fundamentally minimise the impact of such change on small social enterprises and voluntary organisations may be unrealistic.

It is also important to recall that at the first interview, most organisations reported positive developments in terms of improving organisational efficiency and reducing wasted time and effort and these positive effects had in many cases been sustained. Moreover a clear majority of the organisations re-interviewed in second wave interviews continued to say that they did not believe they would have been able to source and/or afford similar support from elsewhere, suggesting relatively high levels of additionality (see also Section 7.2.2).

Turning to the interviews with staff and other stakeholders, staff generally stressed that building the capacity of organisations to meet their own ICT needs in future had been a major focus of their activity in phase 2 but they and other interviewees noted that the combination of technological change and the turnover of staff and volunteers meant that the improvements they delivered might not be sustained.

‘So you can get people sorted at a particular point in time, but if you go back in three years’ time, those solutions may no longer be appropriate’ (National stakeholder)

Local stakeholders responding to the web-survey tended to have a positive view of the role of Communities 2.0 in supporting positive change by the third sector in the use of technology, while being realistic about the extent to which such changes were sustainable.

Table 22 shows responses to a question concerning changes in the use of ICT by community groups and social enterprises: those who believed that such groups had increased the use of ICT were then asked about the contribution of Communities 2.0 to this change, as shown in Table 23.

Table 22: Extent to which community groups/social enterprises have changed their use of ICT:

	Numbers		
	Increased their use of ICT to manage their organisations	Increased their use of ICT as a tool for engaging members	Increased their use of ICT for wider communications and marketing
Significant increase	12	18	15
Some increase	21	16	18
No particular increase	4	4	5
No increase at all	0	0	0
Don't know	12	11	11

Source: Web Survey of Partner Organisations (base 50)

Table 23: Extent to which Communities 2.0 contributed to changes in ICT use

	Numbers		
	Increased use of ICT to manage organisations	Increased use of ICT as a tool for engaging members	Increased use of ICT for wider communications and marketing
Significant contribution	6	12	8
Some contribution	19	13	17
No particular contribution	2	3	1
No contribution at all	1	0	1
Don't know	5	6	6

Source: Web survey of Partner Organisations (base=33/44)

In all, then, exactly half of all web-survey respondents (25 in all) thought that Communities 2.0 had made at least some contribution to the increasing use of ICT to manage organisations, to engage members and for wider communications and marketing, although generally this was thought to be modest.

8.3.2 Economic impact for organisations

The second wave of interviews with assisted organisations yielded relatively little evidence of longer-term economic impact.

Of the 33 organisations we interviewed for a second time, one social enterprise felt that the upgrading of its ICT infrastructure and skills had improved the organisation 'in all areas', enabling them to exert better financial control and to use ICT as part of their delivery of services. For this social enterprise, the support had been essential to underpin its future:

'if they had not come in, the company would not exist, it was critical... the support and the grant came at the right time.'

A housing association attributed a significant increase in interaction with tenants on line, which in turn increased operational efficiency to its investment in digital inclusion, supported by Communities 2.0. Another social enterprise (also identified as a good practice case-study) believed that the intervention of Communities 2.0 had led to significant changes in operational efficiency and had also enabled it to demonstrate the outcomes of its own activities with its client group, thus strengthening its access to external funding:

'It has helped us with funding – we are able to show valid stats and figures in a professional way which has helped us guarantee funding'

Another voluntary and community organisation thought that installing Wi-Fi had boosted the takings in its café, while at least a further six organisations reported that websites or social media tools developed with the aid of the Programme appeared to still be playing an important part in attracting members or customers.

In the course of the fieldwork, these organisations also identified ways in which the support had aided financial viability at the margins, for example:

- Two social enterprises pointed to the fact that it was only through the Programme that they had become aware of the potential to access Microsoft software at preferential rates through the Charity Technology

Exchange – with one of these estimating that this had saved the Charity thousands of pounds while the other also argued that the ICT equipment provided for mobile workers as part of the Package of Support (which enabled them, for example, to get clients to sign appropriate paperwork during home visits) had increased their efficiency and significantly reduced cost margins;

- A voluntary group which had been committed to undertaking a digital inclusion project and which would have proceeded with this even without Communities 2.0 support made significant savings because Programme staff advised them on cheaper digital story making kits than they had originally envisaged purchasing: they had originally costed very expensive kits but had been advised that they could download software for free and they only needed to buy the microphones;
- A small community group which without Communities 2.0 would have paid a professional IT company £1,000 for a website which they would then have had to pay to update regularly.

However, for the majority of organisations the assistance made no discernible difference in terms of their financial performance or viability. Indeed, in two social enterprises where at the first interview, interviewees had attributed an increase in turnover, profit and (in one case) employment to the boost provided by the assistance with new websites and use of social media, the second interviews suggested that things had arguably slipped backwards (though in neither case was this in any way connected with the role of Communities 2.0): thus, a tourist attraction had had to make redundancies while a nursery had seen turnover fall, although here the interviewee thought that the web and Facebook presence had aided the recruitment of new parents and had probably prevented worse results and safeguarded jobs:

‘we had a poor year last year ... but it could have been worse’.

In a third social enterprise, a new website enabling the organisation to use e-commerce to deal direct with individual customers had initially boosted

turnover but by the time of the second interview was no longer being much used as the business had chosen to focus on its traditional business-to-business trading.

Neither had assistance given rise directly to any new social enterprises; the original ambitions of one digital initiative to develop a sustainable social enterprise providing ICT services (which had already seemed challenging at the time of the 2011 interview) had come to nothing by the second interview, partly because the timescales were too short and partly because of difficulties within the host organisation.

However, the organisation which was also a good practice case-study had succeeded in starting up a new income-generating subsidiary, though this was not directly attributable to Communities 2.0. A third organisation interviewed for the first time in 2013 had ambitions to start a new social enterprise, but this organisation was unable to be contacted for the second round of interviews.

Of the social enterprises assisted only one had created a job directly related to the support received, and in this case, it was arguable that it had displaced employment or at least work within the private sector.

More generally, many of the organisations believed that the assistance had increased their profile and credibility with customers, clients, funders and other stakeholders: thus, one campaigning community group believed that a dynamic and attractive web presence had helped them establish their credibility with the local AM, MP and Councillors – as well as boosting their own view of themselves as a ‘professional’ organisation – while another voluntary group believed an increase in members was due to its new website.

Turning to the organisations highlighted to us by Communities 2.0 as good practice (which as noted were mostly social enterprises) it is notable here too

that interviewees generally did not highlight significant outcomes in terms of financial performance. Of the eight case-studies¹⁰⁶:

- In three, although the ICT Reviews which had been carried out were highly valued, in practice the recommendations had not (yet at least) been implemented;
- In two, the organisations were not directly involved in income generation or trading;
- In one, the involvement of Communities 2.0 had led to significant improvements in terms of operating efficiency, but the organisation, which had now recruited an IT professional, had moved on to a new level;
- In one, the support had made a significant difference in terms of operating efficiency and increasing the capacity of the organisation to trade in a new way, with an increased membership.

Staff and national stakeholders generally tended to echo the evidence from the fieldwork and stressed that the intervention of Communities 2.0 had only been able to have a modest effect in terms of putting third sector organisations on a sustainable footing and in terms of economic impacts.

Staff most directly involved with the support to organisations generally argued that the ICT Reviews they produced often showed the way that growth and operational efficiency could be achieved, but that all too often their advice was not acted upon either because the options presented were seen as too ambitious or because the process of seeking funding from Communities 2.0 was unduly onerous.

They and other interviewees cited a number of success stories, for example:

- a care agency which had been supported by the Programme to digitise its roster system, allowing staff to access their roster without having to call in the office; the Swansea Gymnastics Centre which had introduced an online booking system with the support of the

¹⁰⁶ Excluding the one interviewed first in 2013 as part of the randomly selected second cohort

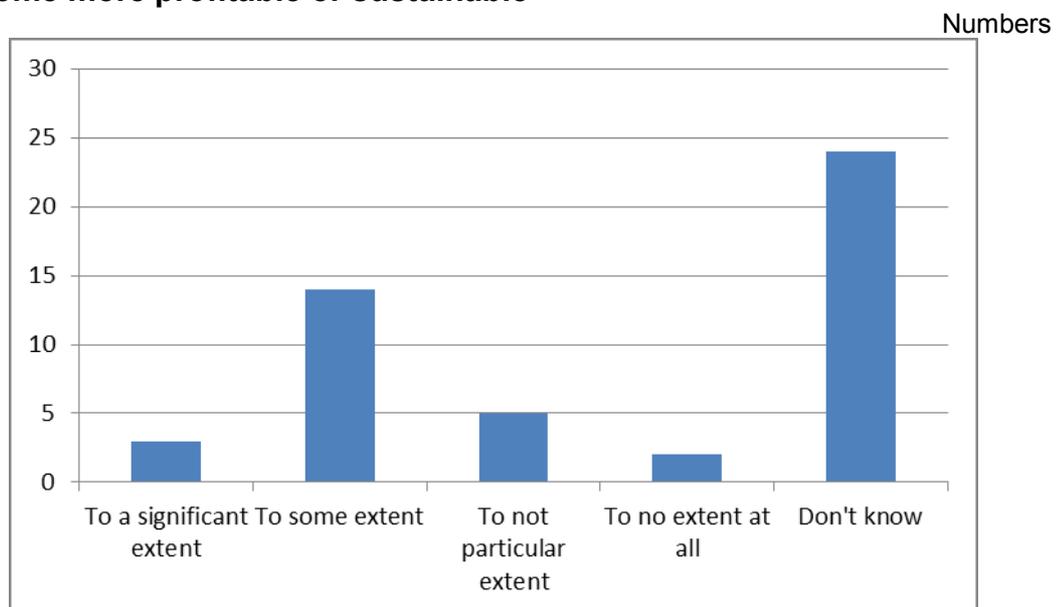
Programme, with a significant financial impact from being able to fill unused slots at short notice;

- A small voluntary organisation where a volunteer had previously spent two days a month addressing envelopes to supporters by hand and had replaced this with a system that took an hour, thus freeing up valuable time for service-delivery.

However, it was accepted that these were not necessarily typical. At the same time, some stakeholders did argue that for at least some of the organisations assisted, the support had been really ‘transformational’.

In terms of the web-survey of local stakeholders, almost half of respondents were unable to comment on the extent to which the Programme had contributed to making social enterprises more profitable or sustainable and of those that were, most believed it had made some contribution, with only three respondents thinking this was true to a significant extent (Figure 9)

Figure 9: Extent to which the Programme helped social enterprises become more profitable or sustainable



Source: Web-survey of Partner Organisations (base = 50)

8.4 Outcomes for Individuals

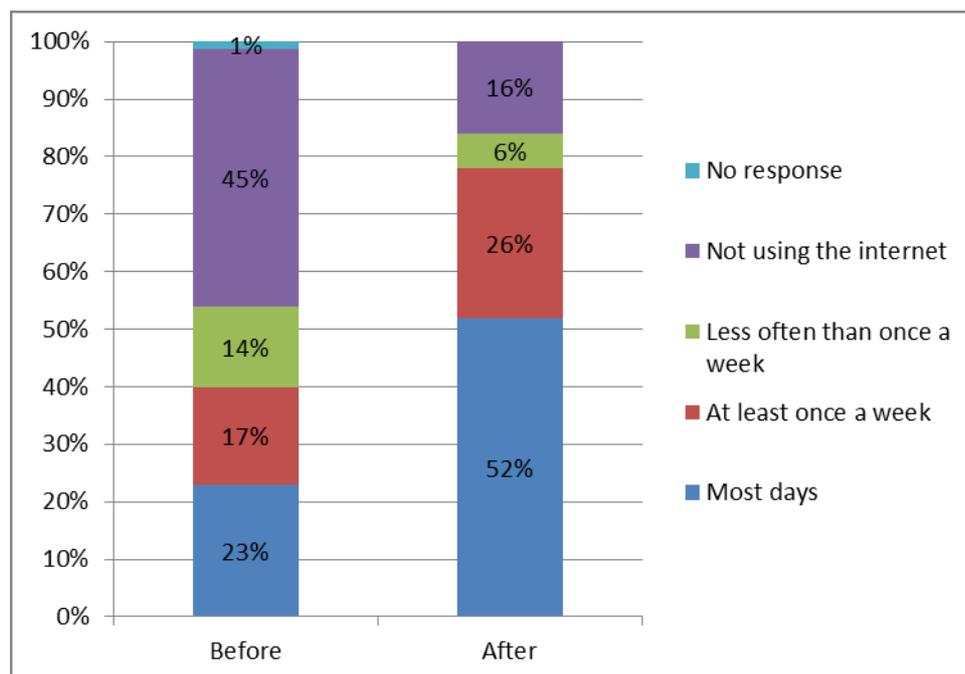
The findings of the evaluation in respect of the outcomes for individuals are, in general terms, significantly more positive than those for organisations.

8.4.1 Changes in use of the internet by survey respondents

Turning first to the findings of the first wave of the telephone survey, interviewees reported significant changes in their use of the internet after receiving support from Communities 2.0, compared to the position prior to engagement: a comparison between 'before' and 'after' across all three cohorts suggests significant added value in terms of moving participants up the 'engagement ladder' (Figure 10).

In all, the proportion of beneficiaries not using the internet at all or less than once a week had reduced after participation by some 37 per cent (216 respondents), while the proportion using the internet on 'most days' had increased by 29 per cent (164 respondents);

Figure 10: Before and after use of the internet by survey respondents

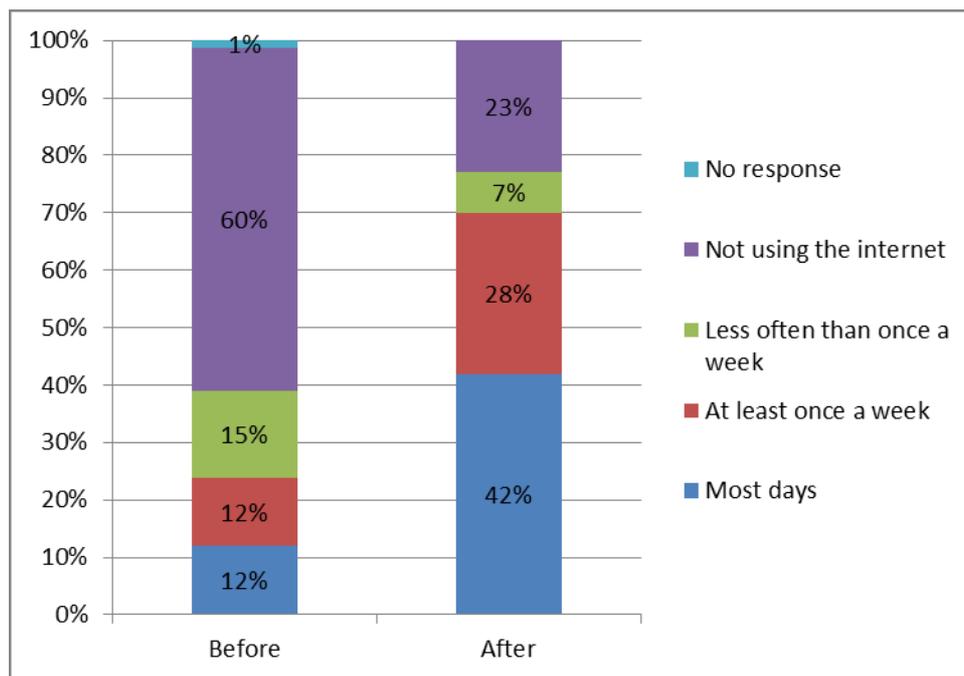


Source: Survey of 571 participants in 2011, 2013 and 2014

The increase in use was mirrored by an increase in the proportion saying that they had access to the internet at home with 449 (79 per cent) reporting this was the case compared to 367 (64 per cent) prior to engaging and an increase in the proportion saying that they used computers or other ICT devices regularly (with 464 or 81 per cent saying that they used such devices at least once a week compared to 250 or 44 per cent prior to participation).

The change was particularly sharp amongst the older beneficiaries, with the proportion not using the internet at all or using it less than once a week falling from 75 per cent before participation (179 or 239 respondents) to 30 per cent afterwards (71 respondents) as shown by Figure 11.

Figure 11: Before and after use of the internet by survey respondents aged 65 and above



Source: Survey of 239 participants aged 65 and above in 2011, 2013 and 2014

Comparisons with data from the National Survey for Wales, suggest that while the proportion of beneficiaries saying that they used the internet prior to

participation (at 54 per cent) was significantly lower than for the population as a whole, it was very significantly higher – at 84 per cent - after participation¹⁰⁷.

Indeed, the proportion of beneficiaries in our survey reporting using the internet after participation in Communities 2.0 was higher than the proportion of the population using the internet in the 20 per cent least deprived areas in Wales and more than 10 per cent higher than for the population as a whole in the 20 per cent most deprived areas in Wales¹⁰⁸. This figure is the more impressive given the age profile of the beneficiaries. Indeed, for those aged 65 and above, the proportion of interviewees who reported that they used the internet after participation was 77 per cent (184 of 239): this compares to only 39 per cent and 44 per cent of those aged 65+ saying that they currently used the internet in the 2012/13 and 2013/2014 National Surveys.

Even so, after participating, a minority of 90 (or 16 per cent) of survey respondents said that they did not use the internet: of these, all but seven said that they had never used it since completing participation in Communities 2.0. Most of these (61 of the 90) were older people, representing 26 per cent of all those aged 65 and over.

A diverse range of reasons were given by this minority for not using the internet with lack of skills (cited by 28 or one-third of these respondents) being the most frequently cited, perhaps suggesting that interventions were sometimes too light touch. Other relatively common responses were:

- The cost of equipment being too high (21 or 25 per cent of those not using the internet);
- Not wanting to use the internet (19 or 23 per cent);
- Health problems making it difficult (14 or 17 per cent);
- Not needing to use the internet (13 or 16 per cent)

¹⁰⁷ In 2012/13 77% of the population as a whole were internet users, rising to 79% in 2013/14

¹⁰⁸ National Survey for Wales 2012/13: Digital Inclusion, p.21: 72% of the population in the quintile of most deprived areas were internet users compared to 82% of the population in the quintile of least deprived areas.

- The access cost being too high (11 or 13 per cent)¹⁰⁹.

Use of the internet was most commonly found at home – with 422 respondents (or 87 per cent of all those using the internet) saying that they accessed the internet at home¹¹⁰ but 135 (28 per cent) saying that they accessed the internet ‘in another public place e.g. library, community centre, internet cafe’: interestingly, the 2011 cohort was much less likely to use such public places, again perhaps reflecting more appropriate targeting of the Programme on the most disadvantaged during phase 2 but also perhaps reflecting the greater availability of equipment and Wi-Fi. 75 respondents (or 15 per cent of internet users) said they used the internet at work.

Lap-top computers at home and work were the main ways of accessing the internet, with two-thirds of internet users citing this (318 or 65 per cent) as shown in Table 24¹¹¹.

Table 24: Ways of accessing the internet

Activity	Number	Percentage
Desktop computer	254	52
Laptop at home or in work	318	65
Mobile phone or smart phone	110	23
Handheld computer (e.g. tablet, iPad, Palmtop)	89	18
Laptop away from home or work	43	9
Digital TV	34	7
Games Console	16	3
Other	4	1

Source: Telephone survey of beneficiaries in 2011, 2013 and 2014 (571 base)

Interestingly, the proportion using smartphones remained relatively low in all cohorts (perhaps reflecting the cost/availability of contracts to access the internet by phone).

¹⁰⁹ Respondents could cite multiple reasons

¹¹⁰ Respondents could provide multiple responses

¹¹¹ Respondents could provide multiple responses

In terms of the reasons for accessing the internet for personal or private use¹¹², Table 25 provides details of responses on this:

Table 25: Reasons for accessing the internet for personal or private use

Activity	Number	Percentage
General Browsing	448	92
Email	420	86
Finding information about health, government or public services	329	67
Finding information about other goods and services (including holidays, flights, houses)	314	64
Buying or ordering tickets, goods or services (excluding shares and financial services)	242	50
Chat rooms, message boards, social networking sites or blogging (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	197	40
Looking for jobs or work	184	38
Listening to the radio or watching TV Programmes	178	36
Finding information related to schoolwork or an education course	154	32
Reading or downloading online news (including newspapers or sports news)	148	30
Playing or downloading music, games, books or other software	147	30
Personal banking, financial and other investment activities	137	28
Telephoning over the internet/video-conferencing	121	25
Selling goods or services online (e.g. through online auctions)	103	21

Source: Telephone survey of beneficiaries in 2011, 2013 and 2014 (571 base)

Given the demographic make-up of the sample, the relatively high usage of the internet for job search is notable: indeed, 68 per cent of those of working age who used the internet reported using it in this way. The fact that half of respondents who accessed the internet did so to buy tickets, goods or services suggests that a relatively large proportion of those supported by the

¹¹² Respondents could give multiple responses

Programme as a whole will have been enabled to have accessed savings available through online channels discussed in Chapter 2.

Despite the fact that finding information about health, government or public services was one of the most commonly cited reasons for accessing the internet, only a minority of respondents said that they had used the internet to access the Welsh Government (97 or 20 per cent of those using the internet [17 per cent of the entire sample]) or another public agency or local authority (193 or 40 per cent of internet users [34 per cent of the entire population]). These figures are distinctly lower than the equivalent figures for internet users across the Welsh population as a whole as recorded by the National Survey for Wales.

As noted in Chapter 1, our survey work also involved a longitudinal element in order to investigate whether benefits from participation in Communities 2.0 were sustained: follow up surveys were conducted with participants, with a total of 304 re-interviews achieved. These have been compared with the responses of the same interviewees in the first wave interviews to minimise any bias from the willingness of participants to be re-interviewed.

Comparing the results of the second wave survey with the first wave responses from the same 304 respondents, the overwhelming impression is that there was relatively little change in the internet use by these individuals. To a very large extent, this may be regarded as positive, in that the gains which were registered from participation in the Programme were generally (though not universally) sustained, though it is also fair to point out that while some respondents had undertaken further learning relating to ICT, there was relatively little evidence of further development in skills or use building on the experience.

In all, 228 of the respondents (75 per cent) had access to the internet in the home at the time of the second interview, compared to 240 in the first round interviews (though six respondents did not give a clear answer to this question at the re-interview stage), and 234 (77 per cent) reported that they currently

used the internet, compared to 248 in the first round interviews (though five respondents did not give a clear answer to the question at the re-interview stage). While this represents a slight ‘falling off’ of interest on the part of a minority, it nevertheless also represents a net gain compared to the original profile of these participants, in that 161 (53 per cent) had said they were internet users prior to participation.

51 second wave respondents reported that they had never used the internet, three fewer than said the same thing at the time of the first wave interviews, with the reasons cited very similar to those of all participants who did not use the internet after participation.

Responses to the question on frequency of access to the internet revealed similar patterns as in the first wave interviews, albeit with a ‘tailing off’ of interest in a relatively small minority who reported using the internet less frequently at the second wave stage, as shown in Table 26 below:

Table 26: Use of the internet by second wave respondents compared to their original response (absolute number, not percentages)¹¹³

Use	Numbers		
	Second Wave	First Wave	Prior to Engagement
Do not use	51	54	143
Less often than once a week	32	17	52
At least once a week	71	78	48
On most days	149	154	59
No response	1	1	2

Source: Interviews with the same 304 participants in 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015

As with the first wave interviews in general, however, the net effect of participation in increasing the frequency of internet usage appears clear. The internet was principally accessed at home¹¹⁴ (by 226 or 90 per cent of all those using the internet, compared to 230 at the first wave interviews), with 50

¹¹³ Base = 304

(or 20 per cent) accessing it in a public place such as a library (compared with 69 at the first wave).

Access to the internet was principally through laptops¹¹⁵ (171 respondents or 68 per cent of those using the internet) or desktops (104 respondents or 41 per cent), but with an increased tendency to use laptops compared to the first wave interviews (presumably reflecting the change in the price differential between the two) when these figures were 162 and 128 respectively.

Although still a relatively small minority, the proportion of internet users using handheld devices such as iPads had increased from 39 (13 per cent) at the first wave to 70 (28 per cent) by the second wave, while usage of mobile phones to access the internet had increased more slowly (from 47 or 15 per cent to 55 or 22 per cent): other channels remained rare.

There were some changes in the reasons for accessing the internet (Table 27 over). In particular, there had been sharp increases in the use for downloading music and games, reading on line news and use of the internet for telephony, probably reflecting changes in broader usage than anything specific to participants in the Programme, with overall a modest increase in the range of uses by the respondents.

The numbers saying that they had used the internet to seek information about or to contact the Welsh Government had increased from a low base (from 43 to 55 or 18 per cent of all respondents) but those reporting using the internet to access local authorities or other public services had increased to 107 (35 per cent) compared to 102 at the time of the first wave interviews.

¹¹⁴ Respondents could give multiple responses

¹¹⁵ Respondents could give multiple responses

Table 27: Use of the internet for different purposes by 2011/2013 cohorts in 2013/2014 (absolute number, not percentages)¹¹⁶

Purpose	Numbers	
	Second Wave	First Wave
General browsing	212	235
E-mail	204	221
Finding information about health, government or public services	179	148
Finding information about other goods and services (including holidays, flights, houses)	157	168
Buying or ordering tickets, goods or services (excluding shares and financial services)	134	124
Reading or downloading on-line news	134	71
Chat rooms, message boards, social networking sites or blogging	106	89
Playing or downloading music, games or other software	103	63
Listening to the radio or watching TV	99	81
Finding information about schoolwork or an education course	72	69
Telephoning over the internet/video-conferencing	75	64
Personal banking, financial and investment activities	73	61
Looking for jobs or work	66	80
Selling goods and services	39	54

Source: Interviews with the same 304 participants in 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015

8.4.2 Other Positive Outcomes for Survey Respondents

While beneficiaries' responses to the telephone survey gave a very positive picture of the extent to which engagement with the Programme was leading to change in use of the internet and ICT more generally, respondents also provided evidence of other positive outcomes in terms of confidence and competence.

¹¹⁶ Base = 176/178 (all those who had ever used the internet). Multiple responses were permitted

First wave interviewees were asked as to the extent of the difference (on a 1 – 5 scale where one was ‘no difference’ and five ‘a significant difference’) made by participation and in response:

- 71 per cent of respondents said that it had made a marked difference (4 or 5 on the scale) to their perception of how useful it could be;
- 64 per cent said that it had made a marked difference to their view of how easy it could be to use;
- 61 per cent said it had made a marked difference in their confidence to use IT;
- 65 per cent said had made a marked difference in their desire to use IT;
- 55 per cent said it had made a marked difference in their skills to use technology effectively.

Perhaps reflecting the greater proportion of the 2014 cohort who were of working age (with many recruited through collaboration with JobCentre Plus) respondents from this last cohort were somewhat less likely to respond positively on all of these points with the exception of the desire to use IT, though with the exception of the last of these questions a majority even of this cohort rated the difference as at least 4 on the five point scale.

Even so, across the population as a whole, fairly significant minorities said that participation had made no difference to their desire to use technology (80 or 14 per cent), their confidence (63 or 11 per cent) or their skills (73 or 13 per cent) – though in the case of desire, this may, of course, be because they already felt strongly motivated before participation.

In terms of progression, half of all first wave respondents (285 or 50 per cent) said that participation in Communities 2.0 had definitely made it more likely they would undertake further learning related to computer or IT-related skills, with a further 29 per cent (166) saying this was possibly the case, leaving a minority of a further fifth who did not believe it had made this more likely.

While over half of the respondents (328 or 57 per cent) said that a question as to whether participation had enhanced their job prospects was not relevant to them (mostly because of their age), and a further 15 per cent (87 respondents) said that it had made no difference, over a quarter of all participants thought it had either made them much more employable (76 respondents or 13 per cent) or made them 'a bit more employable' (73 or 13 per cent): this rose to 52 per cent in the case of respondents aged between 25 and 54.

Turning to the second wave of the survey, 85 of the 304 respondents who were re-interviewed (28 per cent) said that they had undertaken further courses or learning related to ICT since their initial experience with Communities 2.0, with around half of these saying that they definitely (22 or 24 per cent) or probably (20 or 24 per cent) would not have done so had it not been for the engagement with Communities 2.0¹¹⁷. The third cohort of interviewees – those initially interviewed in 2014 - were significantly less likely to say that they had undertaken further learning.

Of these 85, 38 (45 per cent) said they had attended further basic computer courses, and 25 (35 per cent) said they had learnt how to do things from family and friends¹¹⁸, five (seven per cent) had done digital photography courses and four (six per cent) had done learning connected with Skype.

In terms of wider impacts including those relating to the labour market, it was, of course unrealistic to expect these to be strongly visible, given the fact that only a minority of second wave respondents (137 or 45 per cent¹¹⁹) were of working age - with in all 183 (60 per cent) respondents reporting that they were retired - but responses from the relatively small number of former participants who were in work at the time of the second

¹¹⁷ Ten (12 per cent) said that they definitely would have done so in any event, with a further 25 (29 per cent) saying this was probably the case. Eight (10 per cent) did not know or did not say.

¹¹⁸ Respondents could give multiple responses

¹¹⁹ At the time of the 2011 interviews, 39 were under the age of 65, but no less than ten of these had become 65 in the interim.

wave of interviews as to the role played by Communities 2.0 in them securing their current jobs were encouraging.

60 (20 per cent) of the respondents were in employment at the time of the second wave interviews, with 47 in paid employment and 13 self-employed, a net increase of five compared to the first wave interviews: seven respondents said that they thought that the IT skills and learning that they had done through Communities 2.0 had played a major role in securing their current job, with a further ten reporting that it had played some role¹²⁰. Of those who were neither working nor retired, 38 (12 per cent of all second wave respondents) reported that they were unemployed, 14 (five per cent) said that they were long term sick or disabled, four (one per cent) said that they were studying full-time, three (one per cent) said that they were looking after the home and one that they were 'doing something else'.

8.4.3 Outcomes for Individuals: Stakeholder Views

Stakeholders and digital initiative case-study interviewees were generally fairly confident of the added value of the Programme, arguing that a significant proportion of the beneficiaries would not have found other ways of accessing the skills and knowledge offered, although it was generally acknowledged that a proportion would have found other ways – for example, through family and friends – of doing so. Moreover, some stakeholders, such as some of the JobCentre Plus interviewees in case-study areas (A, C) thought that in the absence of the Programme they would have had to commission providers on a paid-for basis to run basic access courses for job seekers, in order to meet their demanding targets for moving JSA applications on line.

In the absence of evidence such as that presented in our survey, many of these interviewees felt unsighted on the crucial question of the extent to which the gains in terms of confidence and competence which they believed were

¹²⁰ 12 said it had not played a role and five did not know.

being made through the Programme were likely to be sustained by individuals over the longer-term, with some doubting that low-intensity interventions were likely to lead to long-term changes in behaviour – although anecdotally many of them were able to point to examples where engagement with the Programme had led to a ‘light bulb’ moment on the part of individual participants, which in turn had led to a range of positive outcomes including a reduction of social isolation and the sorts of economic impacts discussed in Chapter 2.

However, interviewees (particularly those closest to these issues) were generally more confident that support to job seekers was making a significant difference in terms of both their confidence in using the internet as a job-seeking tool and their employability. Job Centre Plus interviewees pointed out that Wales over the last couple of years had consistently been the region with the highest or second highest level of JSA applications being made online, and with 70 per cent of jobs now being advertised exclusively online, it was believed that this level of digital literacy would flow through into positive employment outcomes. It was also noted that regular access to internet had other benefits, such as access to better information about public transport, which reduced the perception that certain jobs were inaccessible to jobseekers.

Moreover, staff participating in the focus groups as well as some of the digital initiative case-study interviewees were able to point to positive examples of personal journeys made by unemployed individuals who had joined projects as volunteers and had gained skills, confidence and stronger CVs which had enabled them to progress into employment. Partly as a result of this, many interviewees were far more positive that the Programme had contributed to a significant number of positive employment outcomes than it had to job creation.

‘I’m sure the interventions we’ve supported have led to lots and lots of people getting jobs’ (National stakeholder)

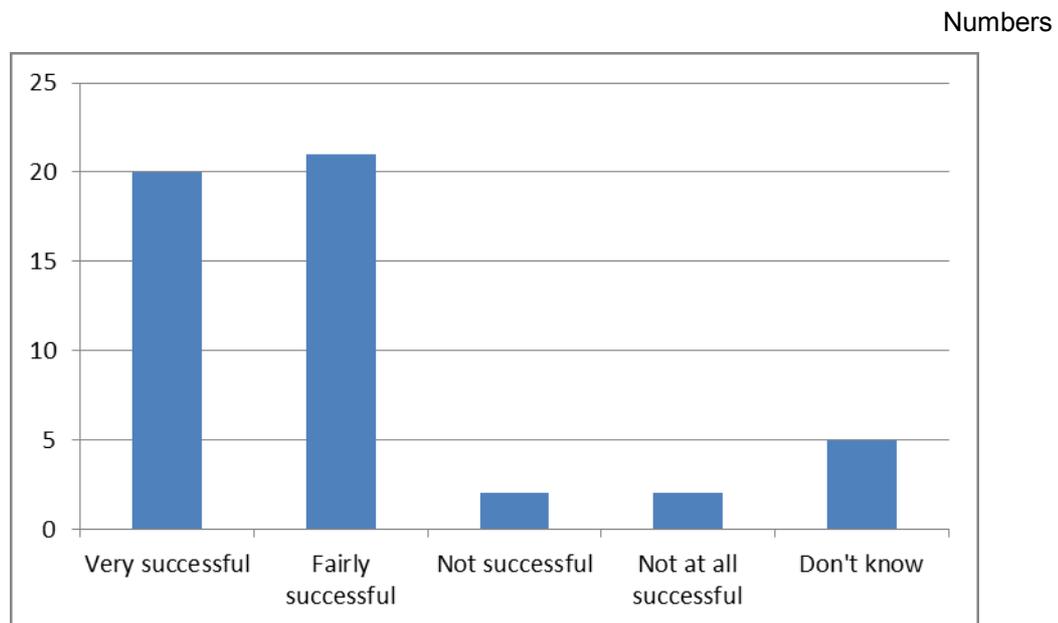
At the same time, several stakeholders expressed frustration that little had been done to formally monitor such outcomes, as they were not a formal target for the Programme and because JobCentre Plus had been unwilling to share data on individual jobseekers' progress.

In terms of progression to further learning, the large majority of stakeholders and interviewees in the digital inclusion case-studies argued that this was not an appropriate way of judging the success or otherwise of the work with individuals. These interviewees believed that the importance of the types of support and intervention offered by Communities 2.0 lay specifically in the fact that it was informal and easy to access and could appeal to individuals who had only negative experience of formal education. As such, they believed that while a minority of participants may have had an interest in taking their learning further – as suggested by the survey – they were unlikely to aspire to undertaking formal qualifications-based learning in a further education setting, particularly given that these generally charged fees. This was despite the fact that the Programme – not least through the 'Computer courses near you' function on the website – enabled people to be signposted to such provision. Moreover, in several of the case-study digital initiatives, the team also arranged for the local college to do a presentation on further learning opportunities at the end of First Click courses.

At the same time, it was noted by some staff and stakeholders that the National Campaign which was delivered in the last year of the Programme had been based around using more formal providers' staff to deliver Communities 2.0 provision in community venues: this was thought to provide an opportunity to see if a higher proportion of participants would respond to even more proactive promotion of further learning opportunities.

Local stakeholders responding to the web-survey also generally gave an upbeat assessment of the outcomes for individuals, with a large majority believing that the Programme had been successful in engaging participants to get involved with technology (Figure 12).

Figure 12: The success of the Programme in engaging participants with technology

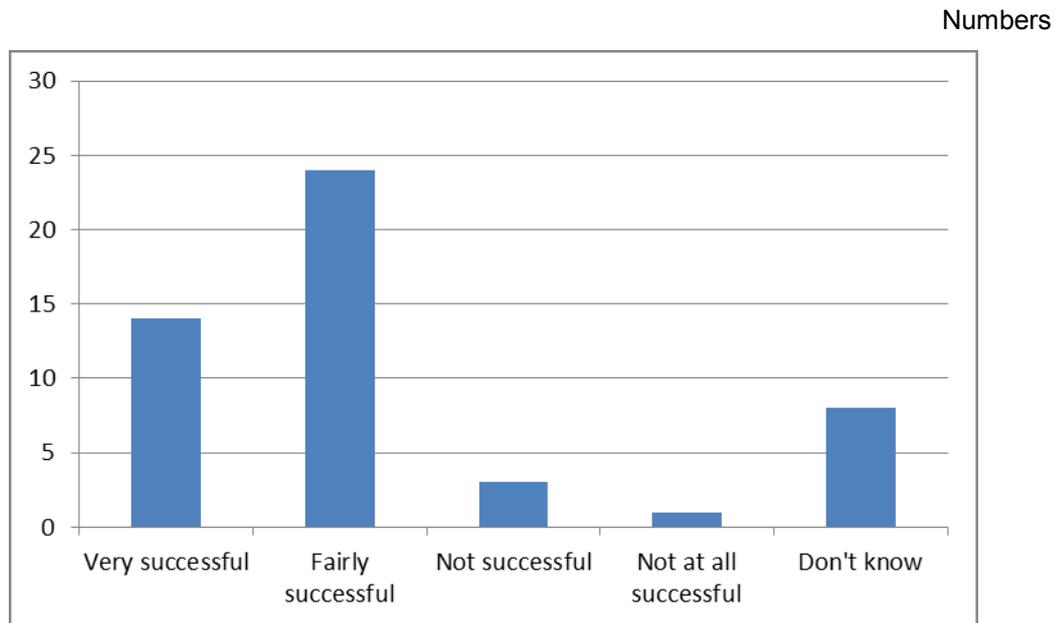


Source: Web Survey of Partner Organisations (base 50)

Asked to elaborate on these responses, 27 respondents explained why they believed it had been successful, most commonly referring to the success of using libraries and other 'non-threatening' community venues (cited by five respondents) and the 'quality and empathy of [the] staff' (by four respondents).

Just under half of all respondents thought the Programme had either been very successful (seven) or fairly successful (17) at engaging participants to enter further learning related to ICT, with the majority of the remaining respondents (19 in all) saying they were not able to comment, while three-quarters of respondents believed that the Programme would have contributed to helping people gain IT skills which would make them more employable (Figure 13)

Figure 13: The success of the Programme in making beneficiaries more employable



Source: Web-Survey of Partner Organisations (base=50)

9.0 Findings: The Future

In this brief Chapter, we consider the views of stakeholders and case-study interviewees on the future¹²¹.

Key Findings

There were mixed views about the need for and shape of any future Programme, though many interviewees believed that support for social enterprises should be integrated with more generic business support and that any new Programme should focus more on supporting digital inclusion of individuals rather than organisations.

Some elements of some of the digital initiatives were likely to be sustained even in the absence of a future central Programme, but most contributors believed that at a minimum a central resource was needed to stimulate local initiatives, bring partners together and exchange good practice between digital inclusion practitioners. Some interviewees also suggested more robust action was needed to ensure internet access for the poorest sections of society, particularly those in social housing.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the staff participating in the focus groups and some other national stakeholders took the view that there was a continued need for Communities 2.0 as it stood, on the basis that the Programme now had significant momentum and that by bringing it to a close, this would be lost, even if subsequently a similar initiative was brought on stream.

‘[The Programme] is beginning to make a real impact now ... it would be a shame to cut it off now ... the Programme has adapted and it should be continued like that ... like the on-line world, always adapting’
(Staff focus group contributor)

¹²¹ It is important to stress that stakeholder evidence was collected during 2014 in advance of the decision by Ministers to launch a new Programme, Digital Communities Wales, to build on the work of Communities 2.0. See: <http://gov.wales/newsroom/people-and-communities/2015/150317-digital-inclusion-project/?lang=en>

Some other staff and national stakeholders understood that the Welsh Government had given strong signals that an initiative on a similar scale was not being considered (not least because it was thought unlikely that ERDF would be available on a similar scale going forward) and commented in the light of what was seen as a *fait accompli*. While some thought this was regrettable, a significant minority argued that the context – in terms particularly of the increased interest in digital inclusion on the part of a wide range of public bodies and to some extent the third sector – that there was no longer a need for a Programme of the scale and ambition of Communities 2.0: rather the ambition should be to encourage ‘mainstreaming’ of digital inclusion activities within other bodies, notably Communities First, Local Authorities more generally and JobCentre Plus.

These interviewees and indeed some other stakeholders believed that there was a strong case for de-coupling work with organisations from the promotion of digital inclusion to individuals.

‘[A future Programme] shouldn’t try to do it all’ (National stakeholder)

They recognised that despite the best efforts of the Programme, the linkage between the work with voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises and the work with individuals had not been strong.

These interviewees argued that in future, building the capacity of social enterprises to use and exploit ICT should be integrated with the more generic business support ‘offer’ to social enterprises or to micro-enterprises more generally: indeed, the WCC was already in discussions with the Welsh Government and WEFO on this basis. Similarly, continued financial support for the ICT equipment, website development etc. should be integrated with whatever small grant schemes were made available under the new round of Structural Fund Programmes.

In terms of other voluntary and community organisations, views were more divergent. There was certainly a general recognition that there remained a

significant need for support within the sector (with one interviewee fearing a crisis as PCs using the XP operating system, which were still widely used in the sector started to fail) – and indeed, that it was in the nature of the sector that such needs would be perennial. But whereas a small number of interviewees felt that support should be integrated with more generic support services from the voluntary sector ‘infrastructure’ (the WCVA and CVCs), others doubted that this was realistic, while some argued for a stream of grant funding similar to that which had been available for social enterprises only from Communities 2.0.

Turning to the promotion of digital inclusion for individuals, many stakeholders, as well as many of those interviewed in the digital initiative case-studies, while strongly positive about what had been achieved recognised that to some extent the hardest work was yet to do: almost by definition, the individuals who had not yet been touched by Communities 2.0 were the hardest to reach, notably those with specific disabilities, the housebound and those with very little confidence. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, some stakeholders felt that getting to these groups could better be achieved by individuals and organisations who already had other reasons to come into contact with them than by a separate initiative: and that a number of these organisations had now realised, not least through the work of Communities 2.0, that this was important also for their own agendas.

In particular, while the commitment of social housing providers was thought to be somewhat patchy, it was argued that digital inclusion was increasingly being recognised as of fundamental importance to securing future revenues and minimising administrative costs. In the context of one of the case-studies (C), moreover, it was noted that one Council had started to require Supporting People providers to routinely report back on what they had done to ensure that tenants had appropriate ICT skills and access to the internet and this was seen as a potential model for others.

Similarly, in many areas Communities First clusters had taken on board the importance of promoting digital inclusion as part of the anti-poverty thrust of

the work: it was argued that the Welsh Government was in a strong position to embed this still further.

In terms of jobseekers, it was noted by several interviewees that a major redevelopment was underway whereby each Job Centre would have an area equipped with full Wi-Fi and with a mix of PCs and tablets, where jobseekers could access the internet on site, with support from specially trained staff: until very recently it had been impossible for advisers to demonstrate how to use the UJM website, for example, because of the levels of control on digital access (for example, not being able to do a web-search for 'pubs' which made it difficult to identify jobs in the hospitality sector).

Libraries too, were seen as having been transformed in terms of their approach to digital inclusion, with management and staff understanding that the re-invention of libraries as community internet hubs was helping to demonstrate their continued importance as a community resource at a time of swingeing cuts. Although many felt that progress elsewhere in local authorities was patchy, there were some grounds for optimism that digital inclusion was being mainstreamed in some areas, for example, in Carmarthenshire where a training module on digital inclusion had been developed which it was hoped would be rolled out to all staff having front-line contact with the public.

In this context, some interviewees felt that any future initiative needed to build on what had been achieved through the digital initiatives in terms of motivating and mobilising this sort of development: and it was noted that in its last year, Communities 2.0 had launched a major initiative to offer training in digital inclusion to front-line staff from a wide range of organisations (with some of our fieldwork with digital initiatives suggesting this was seen as a very positive development): in total, this succeeded in training around 200 front-line staff from libraries, housing associations and other organisations.

At the same time, there was nervousness that in the context of the severe downward pressure on public expenditure, the sustainability of such initiatives could not be guaranteed.

Evidence from the five digital initiatives confirmed this: in one which had already closed (B), momentum had to a large extent been lost (led by a third sector organisation), with individuals asking for support being signposted to provision at a local further education college (for which fees were charged) and in at least one other (A - led by a CVC), it was unlikely that activity would be continued at the same intensity. However, in two others (C and D) - one led by a Local Authority and another by a Housing Association - there was considerable optimism that at least some of the activity would be sustained, albeit in part by accessing external funding (from the BIG Lottery and from Communities First) while in the fifth (E - led by a third sector organisation), it was also hoped that activity could be taken forward with the support of external funding.

While in at least three cases, digital initiatives had developed a cadre of volunteers, it was widely recognised by stakeholders in these case-studies and by national stakeholders that such volunteers were not wholly self-sustaining: they needed an infrastructure of support, encouragement and oversight, while there would also be a need continually or periodically to recruit and train new volunteers to replace those leaving to access employment or simply because of changes in priorities and commitments.

Even where stakeholders and other interviewees believed that a successor to Communities 2.0 which provided funding to local activities was not appropriate, it was generally felt that some form of ongoing central digital inclusion resource for Wales would be needed to stimulate local initiatives, bring partners together and exchange good practice between digital inclusion practitioners. Otherwise there was a risk that local initiatives would continually 'reinvent the wheel' or that individual digital inclusion officers would be left to work in isolation in large organisations.

‘if you lose the central co-ordinating role, then I’m afraid it’s going to fail and go out of the window’ (Staff focus group contributor)

This, some argued, could also provide an ongoing home for the resources developed by the Programme (including the ‘live’ resource of ‘Computer Courses Near You’) which otherwise risked simply being archived.

A number of stakeholders also suggested that while the focus on building skills, confidence and competence as the key to digital inclusion remained appropriate, there were significant issues which needed to be addressed with regard to internet access. As already noted, several interviewees felt that social housing providers in particular, despite discussions of this, had failed so far to get to grips with the need to ensure there was ubiquitous access to Wi-Fi, given the issues that many digitally (and socially) excluded individuals had with securing and affording contracts with internet service providers:

‘they need to put in Wi-Fi like they put in water, but they just don’t see it yet, they see it as a cost’ (National stakeholder)

However, at least two other interviewees believed that housing associations did not have the technical expertise or negotiating clout needed to secure a suitable deal with providers, with one arguing the Welsh Government needed to take a lead and the other that Communities 2.0 itself should be more proactive, drawing on its ‘technical capability’.

Responses from local stakeholders to the web-survey largely echoed these somewhat mixed views about future sustainability. Asked whether their own digital inclusion activities would be sustained, a clear majority thought that they would (see Table 28).

Table 28: Likelihood of digital inclusion activities being sustained

	Numbers
Response	Number of respondents
Very likely	13
Fairly likely	19
Not very likely	11
Not at all likely	2
Don't know	4

Source: Web survey of Partner Organisations (base 50)

Asked how future activities would be funded, at least 10 respondents said that they believed their own organisation would fund continued activities though one noted 'we will struggle with this', while two thought that activities would be delivered by volunteers and would not require funding and two thought activities targeting jobseekers would be supported by JobCentre Plus and Housing Associations. Nine respondents in all hoped to access some form of external funding to support activities with four citing (different) specific sources.

Despite this, the vast majority of web-survey respondents (42 in all) thought that there needed to be a successor Programme (two thought this was not needed and four did not know).

10.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Conclusions

As Communities 2.0 comes to an end, it is apparent that it has remained relevant in a changing policy context. Indeed, the increasing pressure from the UK Government in particular to migrate service delivery (notably related to welfare benefits) to an online environment has both underlined the critical importance of digital inclusion as part of a coherent anti-poverty strategy and helped to generate interest from potential beneficiaries as well as from other organisations.

It seems clear from the fieldwork that we have undertaken that the Programme management team has been flexible in the way in which it has taken forward the Programme in order to adapt to and indeed exploit these changing circumstances. The changes that were introduced at the start of phase 2, with the formation of the area teams, appear to have been carried through efficiently and appropriately and the digital initiatives, in particular, have been an important and successful new element, which not only has extended the reach of the Programme but has also started to develop a cadre of staff and volunteers within other organisations which, nurtured appropriately, may well, at least in part, be self-sustaining. While the scale of change required has not always been easy for the staff, the delivery partners have clearly risen to the challenge. Relations between the WCC as lead partner, the DIU and WEFO have also been effective.

However, it is also clear that the centre of gravity of the Programme has decisively shifted during phase 2 towards the effort to promote digital inclusion of individuals. Despite a stronger effort in recent years to use the work with voluntary and community organisations (and to a lesser extent, social enterprises) as a means to the end of reaching digitally excluded individuals, rather than simply meeting their expressed needs in terms of ICT support, the linkage between the different elements (individuals, voluntary and community

organisations and social enterprises) of the Programme has remained somewhat tenuous.

To some extent this is reflected in the performance against the agreed targets, though across the board the Programme has done relatively well, given that the targets originally agreed with WEFO and the Welsh Government have generally been revised upwards rather than the reverse. The performance in respect of individual beneficiaries is especially impressive, albeit that in some cases, the interaction with the Programme may have been slight. Performance in respect of new enterprises created is somewhat disappointing in contrast – though we have no reason to question the argument that the Programme has suffered because of rules around double-counting and the primacy of other social enterprise business support projects in terms of claiming these outputs – as is that on new jobs created.

There has been considerable improvement in terms of the performance on the cross-cutting theme targets and, in reality, the proportion of all enterprises assisted which have also received support on equalities and/or environmental management policies is reasonably impressive. Moreover, the monitoring data suggests that the work with individuals has succeeded well in engaging with a diverse range of people.

In terms of outcomes, our qualitative research with voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises presents a somewhat mixed picture. Hard outcomes – in terms of jobs created, increased turnover and profit and decreased reliance on grants – would appear to be few, although most organisations were unstinting in their praise of the support they had received and were able to identify at least short-term benefits in terms of operating efficiency and resilience: it was also clear that for most supported organisations, the counterfactual would have been muddling through (potentially with serious negative consequences) or accessing more expensive and less appropriate help from the private sector.

However, the longitudinal element of the research highlighted the fact that in reality, this sort of support to third sector organisations is rarely transformative and may also have a short shelf-life, given the rapid change in technology and the often equally rapid turnover of staff and Board members of such organisations. Despite real efforts – particularly in phase 2 - to build capacity within organisations to manage ICT as well as providing solutions to immediate problems, and despite a much more rigorous approach on taking a strategic approach through the ICT Review, for most organisations we met, the support from Communities 2.0 did not provide long-term solutions: it was arguably unrealistic to expect it to do so.

Moreover, while social enterprises which received packages of support were generally very satisfied, in some cases the process was perceived as unduly onerous (compared with other grant schemes available to micro-enterprises), a view echoed by staff and some stakeholders.

By contrast, the work, particularly during phase 2, with individuals appears to have been a major success. Our longitudinal research with a cross-section of beneficiaries provides clear evidence that the Programme has had a significant and sustained impact in terms of the propensity to use the internet, which is all the more impressive given that the targeting on excluded individuals appears to have become more focused during phase 2 (even as the Programme expanded to take in all parts of the Convergence area).

While it is impossible to be sure what proportion of these beneficiaries would eventually have been persuaded by other means to engage with ICT, and while the expansion of the Programme to all parts of Wales has made it impossible to compare and contrast progress in terms of digital inclusion in assisted and non-assisted areas, we are convinced by the evidence (not least through our digital initiative case-studies) that the approach of Communities 2.0 in delivering in the community, in a non-threatening way and using community development approaches, has succeeded in ‘recruiting’ many individuals who would never have been reached by more conventional routes.

At the same time, the Programme has struggled to reach some groups, particularly those with disabilities and the housebound, given the specific nature of their needs and the intensity of the support required. While Communities 2.0 has made considerable strides in addressing the problem of mass digital exclusion, it is also true more generally, that the residual population of those who are still digitally excluded will be even harder to reach.

Although the narrowing of the gap in terms of digital inclusion between Wales and the rest of the UK (from 11 per cent in 2011/12 to 2 per cent in 2013/14) has certainly been effected by a range of factors (including a natural tendency for digital engagement to plateau once levels of around 80% are reached), it seems likely that the focused effort on digital inclusion through Communities 2.0 has played its part.

Our qualitative research suggests a number of key elements of good practice which have contributed to this success:

- Working with and through willing partners in the public and third sectors, and brokering mutually advantageous relationships, for example between JobCentre Plus and libraries;
- ‘Selling’ the benefits of digital inclusion by finding the ‘hook’ which will interest any given individual;
- Developing and offering provision in small manageable sessions in informal settings and offering ample opportunity for ‘drop-in’ sessions which involve no ongoing commitment;
- Making effective use (particularly during phase 2) of volunteers, based on the development of sound models for ‘training the trainer’: although requiring significant management input, volunteers have not only themselves benefited from the experience of working with the Programme but also appear to have helped in making the provision more accessible and less intimidating.

Both through the partnerships built to deliver digital initiatives and through wider work at national level, Communities 2.0 has also contributed to increasing the visibility and building a greater understanding of the digital inclusion agenda, within both the statutory and the third sector. Partly as a result (though partly also as a result of the realisation that digital inclusion is a route to the more effective and cost-efficient way of delivering services), and despite the very difficult circumstances created by cuts in public expenditure, there is now a real sense of momentum about the agenda.

Drawing conclusions about the value for money of the Programme is highly problematic given:

- The different elements of the Programme, targeting respectively social enterprises, voluntary and community organisations and individuals;
- The impossibility of disentangling the effects of the Programme from other drivers of digital inclusion, notably the ‘push’ from the welfare reform agenda and the development of more accessible technologies, such as tablets and smartphones – particularly given the extension of the Programme to the whole of Wales¹²²;
- The contested scale of the financial benefits flowing from digital inclusion to individuals and to society.

Having said this, and focusing solely on the work with individuals, where we perceive the greater part of the benefit has been achieved, we can conclude that the gross cost per individual beneficiary will have been around £345 per head¹²³. Assuming that our telephone survey is representative and that

¹²² In this context, it is striking that a re-contact survey in early 2015 of the respondents to the 2013-14 National Survey for Wales who had originally reported that they did not use the internet found that 24% of respondents considered themselves users of the internet at the time of the survey, suggesting the extent to which digital exclusion has continued to reduce across the population as a whole: though at the same time it is possible or even likely that some of the increase in the proportion of internet users was attributable to the activities of Communities 2.0 and associated digital initiatives, particularly as 37% of those who had used the internet reported that they either always had some assistance to do so (28%) or relied on someone else to control the device. See: *National Survey for Wales 2013/14 Digital Inclusion re-contact survey*. Welsh Government 2015

¹²³ Based on a total of 61,250 participants across the whole of Wales and total Programme expenditure of £21.059 million. The equivalent figure for the Convergence area only – and excluding the DIU costs which cannot readily be split across the different projects – is around £330.

participation in the Programme resulted in around 30% of beneficiaries being transformed from non-users to sustained users of the internet, then the net cost for each individual who has become digitally included as a result of the Programme is around £1,1500. Given the scale of the savings available to individuals buying goods and services online – even allowing for the different purchasing patterns of those on low incomes – this appears to represent good value for money from the individual perspective, while also contributing to savings from the online delivery of public services and wider societal benefits. These include the benefits of a small but potentially significant proportion of beneficiaries being able to improve their labour market position: if the results of our telephone survey were representative, the Programme would have played a major role in assisting around 1,250 former beneficiaries to access new jobs¹²⁴.

Of course, these calculations, by focusing solely on the work with individuals, ignore the Programme's wider outcomes in terms of raising the awareness of the digital inclusion agenda and developing (in some cases, at least, sustainable) partnerships and tools to address it, as well as the undoubted benefits to the 750+ social enterprises and voluntary organisations which have received organisational support. While considered on a stand-alone basis (and ignoring the role of organisational development as a way to reach digitally excluded individuals), we doubt whether such a robust case can be made for the value for money of the latter strand of activity. However, the reasons for this rest more with the Programme design – the belief that a time-limited ICT intervention with small and often fragile organisations could be transformative – rather than with any flaws in implementation. In practice, external ICT assistance will continue to be needed by these organisations indefinitely, as it is for micro-enterprises in the private sector – and the choice here is whether the public sector should pay in whole or in part for such support, or should leave it to market forces (with, of course, potentially severe

¹²⁴ Based on the findings that seven out of 304 beneficiaries who were re-interviewed 12 - 18 months after the first wave interview said that the support they received from Communities 2.0 had helped 'a lot' in them getting their current job (with a further ten saying it had helped a little): a rate of 2.3%. 2.3% of the estimated 54,563 beneficiaries at the end of the Programme would be 1,255 individuals.

consequences for third sector organisations who cannot find the resources to pay market rates).

If the support provided to organisations has not really had the desired effect of bringing about sustainable change, there is some evidence that Communities 2.0 has already developed a legacy of external organisations (local authorities, some CVCs and larger third sector organisations, housing associations, as well as Communities First clusters) willing to invest their own funds, or to invest in efforts to secure external funding, to continue to promote digital inclusion of individuals. To this extent, we share the view of the Welsh Government that simply continuing or re-creating Communities 2.0, even if it were possible, is not necessary. However, we do believe some central all-Wales resource will continue to be necessary to provide encouragement and support to organisations undertaking front-line delivery of digital inclusion activities. It is in this context we make our recommendations¹²⁵.

10.2 Recommendations

Recommendation 1: The Welsh Government needs to continue to encourage the mainstreaming of digital inclusion as part of its anti-poverty strategy. In particular, Communities First clusters should be encouraged to resource digital inclusion work within their areas.

Recommendation 2: The Welsh Government should seek to allocate resources for a more limited successor Programme to Communities 2.0, focused exclusively on the drive to increase still further the digital inclusion of currently excluded individuals. This should not in itself undertake – nor probably fund – front line activity but should:

- Continue to act as an advocate for digital inclusion to public, private and third sector organisations, focusing on ways in which digital inclusion activities can play into other agendas, such as improving the efficiency of service delivery;

¹²⁵ These recommendations were made in November 2014, in advance of Welsh Ministers' decisions about future programmes.

- Support and encourage partners already involved in the digital initiatives to sustain their involvement, including providing support to access external funding;
- Where necessary, broker new local and thematic partnerships;
- Provide opportunities for networking between individuals and organisations involved in digital inclusion, in order to disseminate good practice and prevent duplication, while working closely with current or emerging networks within sectors (e.g. housing associations, local government);
- Maintain and promote the legacy of Communities 2.0 in terms of tools and techniques, including maintaining the ‘Computer Courses near You’ facility on the website;
- Continue as necessary to provide ‘train the trainer’ training, focused particularly on supporting front-line organisations to develop and support a cadre of volunteers capable of delivering basic ICT training.

Recommendation 3: In addition, and building on the national campaign undertaken in the last few months of the Programme, the Welsh Government should work with training providers to consider how informal learning related to ICT can be sustained (and funded) after the end of Communities 2.0.

Recommendation 4: Given the continued high level of digital exclusion amongst social housing tenants, and the difficulty which individuals with a poor credit history have in securing contracts with ISPs, the Welsh Government should, as a matter of urgency, work with social housing providers to consider how ubiquitous internet access might be offered on a no or low-cost basis, and should examine whether and how future ERDF funding might be accessed to support this.

Recommendation 5: The Welsh Government should consult with relevant representative groups to consider how digital inclusion activity for disabled people can best be taken forward, in the light of the difficulties experienced in reaching large numbers of disabled people in their homes.

Recommendation 6: The Welsh Government should consult with DWP/JobCentre Plus over the future support needs of jobseekers and others in receipt of welfare benefits, who lack the skills, confidence or access to the internet to be able to operate in an online environment. Ideally, given the suggestion from some interviewees that budgets might have been available to support this work had Communities 2.0 not been available, it should seek to secure a financial contribution towards continued support from the Welsh public sector, e.g. libraries, for such individuals.

Recommendation 7: In terms of social enterprises, the Welsh Government should seek to integrate support on ICT issues with the broader business support offer, whether through Business Wales generically or through a dedicated social enterprise support service. Support with upgrading ICT infrastructure and capability should be eligible for any business finance schemes which are specifically targeted on micro-enterprises.

Recommendation 8: In terms of the wider population of voluntary and community organisations, consideration is needed (within the Welsh Government and possibly also within the Third Sector Partnership Council) as to whether providing ICT support (alongside support on such issues as governance and fundraising) should be a part of the role which the third sector infrastructure (the WCVA and CVCs) is expected to play and if so, how this might be recognised through funding. In our view, this is a lower priority for Welsh Government funding than support for the digital inclusion of individuals, but if this is not deemed a priority by the Welsh Government and the sector, then it will need to be recognised that some organisations will struggle to maintain adequate (or in some cases, any) ICT infrastructure.