

APPLE COLLECTIVE

Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience

WHAT IS THE DIGITAL DIVIDE CAMPAIGN?

The digital divide has three elements: access to devices, the skills to access the digital world and inequalities of access (Van Djik 2020).

(1) Physical Access. Physical access to digital devices is far more limited for people experiencing poverty. Physical access can be broken down into Collective access and household access. Collective sites of access, libraries and internet cafes have largely remained closed throughout the pandemic. A household might have no access to digital devices and therefore be unable to access any public health information online, book a doctors appointment, access support services or job search. Household access to digital devices is also restricted as low income households are more likely to share one old laptop (with poor web- camera quality) between two home-schooling children and home-working adults. Limited household physical access also relates to data, data caps, broadband speed all cost money and affect connection quality.

(2) Skills and Digital Capacity. If people living in poverty have devices, then digital skills vary and can be a barrier to connection and full participation in life. Lack of skills prevents people from engaging in online life fully, attending webinars, meetings, completing online forms and advocating for their voice to be heard. Many computer skills courses, mentoring schemes and training available have stopped due to the pandemic. Research has shown that those who have less digital access, such as those living on low incomes, also have less opportunity to build digital skills, including online safety skills, so are more often the victims of online scams and fraud (Ragnedda and Ruiu, 2020).

(3) Inequality of Access. This strand of the digital divide relates to the number and quality of devices and to quality of data and broadband within a household. Sharing one digital device, that has capped data allowance, between a household is a very different experience of digital engagement than a household that has multiple devices and access to unlimited data and WiFi. The functionality of mobile phones, tablets and laptops varies. The device being used affects digital capacity. Laptops, for example, have much better functionality for online meeting software compared to mobile phones. Often digital banking apps require the use of a laptop to set up standing orders or direct debits. Job searching on a phone might be achievable but completing an electronic job application on a phone is time-consuming and often difficult to ensure accuracy. The inequality that exists between those that have a range of data and devices and those that are trying to share one device with limited data affects access to healthcare, education, work and social connection.

WHO ARE THE APPLE COLLECTIVE?

We are the APPLE Collective - a national collective of individuals and organisations who have experienced or are experiencing poverty.

Our aim is to create a sustainable, grassroots network across the UK to raise awareness of poverty, reduce stigma and work together with others to eradicate it.

We work collaboratively with allies to use our voice to affect change and we invite groups that have experience or are led by people who are experiencing poverty to join us and become part of the APPLE Collective.

Our Values: As part of the APPLE Collective we;

- Create a supportive space for the coming together of individuals with direct experiences of poverty to build relationships of trust and mutual understanding.
- Build the capacity of individuals with direct experiences of poverty to share their insights through peer support, training and knowledge sharing.
- Work together at a national, regional or local level to promote the voices and influence of those with lived experience of poverty on the decisions that impact them and to raise awareness of and reduce the stigma associated with poverty.
- Respect the dignity of people from all backgrounds and actively seek to promote equality and diversity in our work.

Our Campaign Partnerships:

- [Operation WiFi](#)
- Good Things Foundation. Leave Nobody in the Dark Campaign.

For more information on the APPLE Collective, visit our website at: www.aplecollective.com

THE EXTENT OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

According to Good Things Foundation, 13% of people struggle to use the internet independently and 11.5 Million people in UK don't have access to the digital skills they need to thrive in today's world. The Office for National statistics details the intersections of digital exclusion, with regional, racial, gender, household type and age disparities in digital access. People in the Northern Ireland, the North East and West Midlands of England were most likely to experience digital exclusion. Women are more likely to experience digital exclusion than men and people from certain BAME communities are more likely to experience digital exclusion. People over the age of sixty five and disabled adults were also more likely to experience digital exclusion.

Research completed by The House of Commons Library for the December 2020 Debate on digital infrastructure, connectivity and accessibility revealed that that over 96% of the UK population have access to the internet. However, this access is linked to income level, those on the lowest incomes have the least access to digital resources as evidenced in research by the University of Cambridge. Research by the University of Cambridge revealed that that only 51% of household earning between £6000-10,000 had home internet access compared with 99% of households with an income of over £40,001. The recent UK Poverty Report and Destitution Report by Joseph Rowntree Foundation both detailed the impact of the digital divide and the fact the digital exclusion has exacerbated existing inequalities, increased barriers to accessing help during the pandemic and created further barriers to accessing work and social security.

OPERATION WI-FI KEY FACTS:

- **The average household usage of the internet is expected to be 1 terabyte of data every month from 2025 and current usage stands at over 400gb a month.**
- **A 1:1 Zoom meeting for one hour uses between 540mb and 1.62gb of data- this increases with the greater number of people on the call.**
- **The average person consumed 5 hours of video content online per day and this was pre-pandemic.**
- **Children from 'better off' families are spending 30% more time on home learning than those from poorer backgrounds.**

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The turbulent time of the Coronavirus pandemic has affected everyone. But for people living in poverty the added pressure of the digital divide has created further barriers that for some have been insurmountable.

HEALTH

Public Health Information has been largely communicated online and many health appointments use online booking systems and online video appointments.

"I have recently moved home and had to change my doctors. The new doctor's surgery is asking me to verify my identity and would prefer it if I sent photos of a recent bill and my passport via email to do this. I don't even have an email let alone know how to upload a photo.... I then tried to make an appointment and they said I could an appointment quicker if I filled in an e-consult form. I'm guessing that again online. Why do people seem to think everyone is online means doing something?"
Jodie, Thrive Teesside, APLE Member

EDUCATION

Covid-19 Lockdowns and Restrictions have forced education to move online, impacting both children and adults.

"Before the lockdown, my daughter stayed after school every day to use the internet there for her homework. Now, without Wi-Fi of our own, I had to swallow my pride to ask our neighbour if we could piggyback onto his network from our flat. He agreed, but I feel like I should be able to chip in for his bill so that I don't have to rely too much on him."

Gloria Poverty Truth Community, APLE Collective
Member

SOCIAL SECURITY. JOB SEARCHING – FINDING WORK.

Our Social Security system can be a lifeline in difficult times for people living on low or no income. People may have a digital device but often it is not sufficient to complete complex online forms required for Universal Credit Applications or for the detailed personal statements for job applications in an increasingly competitive jobs market.

'I'm sick of getting texts off the dole asking me to log on to my journal...I've told them before I have no internet. I have been trying to ring them, but can't get through. I'm worried sick. Will I still get my payment which is due this week, do I have to be doing job searches, they are not really telling us much...'

'Karen' Thrive Teesside, APLE Collective Member.

LEGAL SUPPORT.

As lockdown and restrictions have reduced face to face contact simply emailing solicitors and attending online legal appointments has been an additional challenge. For APLE members who are seeking Asylum and living on £37 a week at £10 data top up card is simply too greater proportion of their weekly income.

"I do not have Wi-Fi at home, even before the lockdown I was unable to download important documents at home while researching with my phone. This did not help me to manage my time efficiently since casework which should have been done at home was forced to be completed the next day in RAPAR where I can gain access to internet.

At moment the lockdown has worsened the whole situation because I cannot go out to where I can connect to the network. I can only send e-mails if I beg to be connected to someone's Wi-Fi."

Vitalis, RAPAR. APLE Collective Member.

SUPPORT SERVICES.

Many Voluntary and Community sector mutual aid support services have been fantastic at swift and much needed support. Many, however, have operated solely online, leaving those who are completely excluded blocked from even asking for help.

"during the lockdown, a woman in south London tried to buy a refurbished smartphone on a very small budget, because she has no fixed abode, she couldn't open even a basic bank account and had no bank card. So used a small shop that would take cash payments but they sold her a faulty phone with no warranty. She then discovered that she could have purchased a new phone for a cheaper price at a high street shop however that chain already had a no-cash policy in place and she did not qualify for their credit service, making it impossible for her to shop there. Having no smartphone during the lockdown has effectively cut her off from her support network."

(ATD Fourth World, APLE Collective)

APLE WEBINAR:

Fri, 23 April 2021 / 10:00 – 12:00 BST

We invite groups led by lived experience of poverty to share what you are doing to address the digital divide and tackle digital exclusion in your area. We would love you to join us in conversation at our participatory webinar which shares good practice solutions to the digital divide led by lived experience. You can join to listen, learn and participate. You can join to share your lived expertise in an interactive webinar.

[Click here for more information and to book:](#)

