Radius
HOUSING

Tenant Engagement
Digital Inclusion Strategy & Action Plan
2022 - 2025

Together - we make it happen, we make it count

Contents

Everyone has a place

1.0   Introduction

As Radius enters a new corporate planning cycle we wish to ensure that we use every opportunity to enable our tenants to maximise their potential, live with dignity and contribute to their communities.

We firmly believe that everyone is entitled to a home that is safe, secure and affordable and that with a firm foundation, their educational, employment, health and quality of life prospects will greatly increase.

In line with our Tenant Engagement Strategy, we will promote a range of opportunities for our tenants and residents which include access to online services, and help build the essential skills and confidence required to participate in using digital technology.

2.0   Background

Since March 2020, the use of online technology has become increasingly important to ensure people stay connected.

During the Covid pandemic, it became apparent that many of our tenants and residents didn't have access to the devices, internet or basic digital skills required to avail of the benefits of new technology.

We have implemented new services and processes in response to this need.

The purpose of this strategy is to produce a galvanised response and roadmap for this future service provision.

2.1   Essential Digital Skills Framework

The Department for Education's Essential Digital Skills Framework, defines the categories needed for an adult to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world today and in the future.

The framework sets out 5 categories of essential digital skills for life and work:

Handling Information & Content

Find, manage and store digital information and content securely

Communicating

Communicate, collaborate and share

Transacting

Register and apply for services, buy and sell goods and services, administer and manage transactions online

Problem Solving

Find solutions to problems using digital tools and online services

Being Safe and Legal Online

Stay safe, legal and confident online

Increased digital inclusion helps give our tenants the ability to carry out online financial transactions

Taking part in online activities
can help improve mood, memory,
concentration and reasoning.

Some of the benefits of increased Digital Inclusion are:

✔ Access to advice and financial assistance.

✔ Ability to carry out online financial transactions.

✔ Access to benefit entitlement checks, budget awareness and price comparisons.

✔ Better access to health information and services available.

✔ Being able to order prescriptions online and possibly attend doctor appointments online as GP surgeries move more services online.

✔ The ability to use the internet can reduce social isolation as you can stay in contact with friends and family.

✔ Staying engaged with the local clubs, societies, churches, and many other groups who have now moved online to stay connected with members.

✔ Staying connected with local news and social media outlets.

✔ Access to jobs and education.

✔ Taking part in online puzzles, online games, colouring websites, watch and learn from you tube videos and listen to music which all helps improve mood, memory, concentration, and reasoning.

Providing more digital inclusion options for our tenants and residents will allow Radius to:

✔ Communicate information to our tenants and residents more effectively and sustainably.

✔ Welcome our tenants and residents to participate in online meetings and events benefiting a wide geographical reach of tenants and reducing our carbon footprint.

✔ Offer online meetings outside office hours to suit more tenants.

✔ Be more inclusive and reach more tenants.

3.0   Consultation & Research

Using a variety of surveys, consultations and desktop research, has enabled us to build a picture of the levels of digital exclusion found in our communities and to formulate this strategy as a roadmap to more digital inclusion for our customers.

3.1   Tenant Satisfaction Survey

In April 2021, the Radius TSS was carried out with 1,319 Radius tenants and residents interviewed.

65% of tenants have access to a **smart phone**. 33% tablet or iPad 27% laptop or computer	**49%** use their **own home internet** to access online services. 38% would ask someone else to do it for them.
51% **feel confident** in using the internet to access online services. 64% GN 29% Cat 1 27% SH	**55%** of sheltered tenants **do not use the internet at all**. 45% Cat 1 15% GN

3.2   Social Index Survey

In March 2022, Radius commissioned a Social Index Survey with a small sample of tenants. With regard to Digital Inclusion, it found that:

63% of tenants with an email address are happy we contact them this way.	**23%** do **not** have an email address
45% **feel confident** in using digital services. They were most confident in: 64% using a search engine 58% browsing the internet	**18%** **do not feel confident** in using digital services. They were least confident in: 30% completing applications online 23% protecting their computer against viruses and malware

3.3   Tenant Engagement Strategy

In November 2021 we carried out consultation with tenants on the Tenant Engagement Strategy 2022-25.

Following feedback from the consultation we will support our tenants with Digital Inclusion by sourcing digital training opportunities and resources for those who engage with us with a view to build digital confidence and overcome digital resource barriers.

3.4   Tenants Over 55 years old

Consultation with tenants took place within our sheltered properties in October 2021 to ascertain their access to digital devices and the internet.

The results of the consultation highlighted that:

56% Do **not** have access to the internet in their apartment.	**78%** of tenants said they were **not confident** in using a device and would require support in accessing and using digital technology.
69% tenants in sheltered schemes are in receipt of Housing Benefit with no finances to purchase devices or data.	**63%** of tenants would consider using digital technology and the internet to **stay in touch** with friends and family, **banking online** and **joining a social media** platform.

3.5   Desktop Research

Northern Ireland (NI) has higher levels of multiple deprivation than the rest of the UK with over a third of the population living on or below the 'breadline'.

The most recent statistics from Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency NISRA (May 19) show that 19% of people living in NI are living in relative income poverty and that Northern Ireland is the most digitally excluded region of the UK, with 11.8% of our population non–internet users (Office for National Statistics (ONS) 2021).

Mental illness is the largest cause of ill health and disability in NI and there are higher levels of mental ill health here than any other region in the UK.

Many of our tenants are currently living in Digital Poverty, which is the inability to use IT either due to the lack of access or due to the lack of skills.

We know and understand the importance of Digital Inclusion and the benefits it can bring to our tenants, residents and communities, and have developed this dedicated Digital Inclusion Strategy to increase options for internet access and forums to enable and promote digital inclusion within Radius Communities.

Basic Digital Skills Training hosted by Advice NI Dec 2020

4.0 Our Approach to Digital Inclusion

Radius Housing's first Tenant Engagement Digital Inclusion Strategy sets out what we hope to achieve in the first three years in partnership with our tenants, residents, and stakeholders.

To increase digital inclusion among our tenants and residents, they should have access to:

1. Affordable, robust, broadband internet service
2. Internet enabled devices that meet the needs of each individual user
3. Access to digital training and encouragement to use devices independently
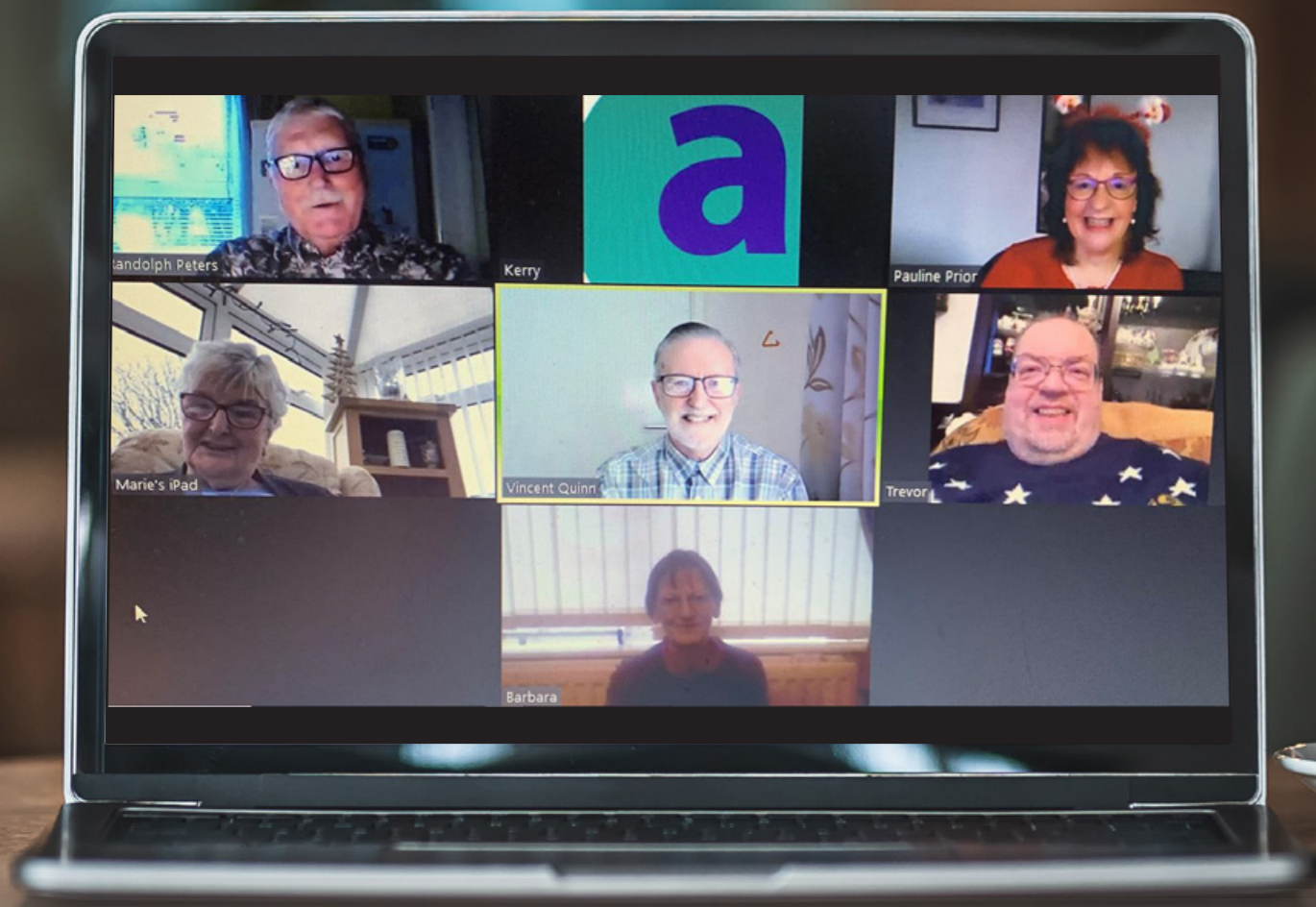4. Technical support when using the devices

The action plan included in this strategy lays out the roadmap for Radius to address digital exclusion and improve digital inclusion across our communities.

We will work together with colleagues across the directorates to identify areas for improvement and to develop projects using a variety of resources available which will benefit our tenants and communities.

We will:

- Invest in our staff and tenants through delivery of digital training programmes in our communities
- Develop Radius online services for tenants
- Build current and develop new partnerships with relevant agencies providing digital training and/or support.
- Identify and tackle the barriers to digital inclusion across Directorates and communities
- Monitor, evaluate and measure the success of the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan

By working together with our staff, stakeholders and tenants, we can address some of the issues which lead to digital exclusion and help to improve the prospects and quality of life for those most affected.

4.1   Action Plan

Objective	How	Specific Plan	When
Invest in our staff and tenants through delivery of digital training programmes in our communities	**Developing Skills** Developing staff and tenant knowledge and skills to become in-house Digital Skills Trainers extending to a yearly digital training programme for tenants and staff.	Identify staff members to attend "Train the Trainer" sessions on digital skills run by Supporting Communities amongst others. Leading to development of an in-house digital skills training programme for staff and tenants. This project is to be promoted across all Radius departments for staff training.	Annually
		Develop a Digital Training programme for tenants and staff.	22/23
		Monitor the feedback and outcomes of the digital training programme once commenced.	Annually
	Develop Role of Digital Skills Champions Encourage tenants and staff who are already confident using devices to become Digital Champions with our support and training to volunteer within their communities to help others.	Aim to have at least 1 Staff Digital Skills Champion in each Housing Management Area who would volunteer time to provide digital support to tenants. This will be promoted to staff through Sharepoint, email, core brief and word of mouth.	22/23
		Develop the role of and recruit Tenant Digital Skills Champions promoting this project through staff, noticeboards, social media, newsletters and word of mouth.	23/24
	Provide digital support that is accessible for all We will support those who need additional support due to disability, age, language or other reasons.	Relationships with external providers will be developed to ensure, where possible, that our tenants can access additional support if required.	23/24
	Staying Safe Online We will promote safe use of online services.	Source training on how to stay safe online, provide literature and support to stay safe online such as being scam aware, keeping passwords safe and online banking.	Annually
		Raise awareness on How to Stay Safe online through our communication platforms.	Annually

Objective	How	Specific Plan	When
To develop Radius online services for tenants	**Promoting Radius Website** By introducing tenants to the Radius Website features.	Continually review our website with the Tenant Executive Committee to ensure the information available is relevant and up to date.	Quarterly
		Use Radius Website as a resource for digital skills training.	Ongoing
		Promote the use of our website to pay rent, report repairs, contact us etc.	Ongoing
		Develop a Self-Service Portal for tenants to access Radius services. Consider any training or support that may be required for tenants.	Development Stage
Build current and develop new partnerships with relevant agencies providing digital training and/or support.	**Partnership working** Ensure that we keep up to date with all on-going digital skills training and support opportunities and actively seek new partnerships with relevant agencies.	Research available digital training based on the digital needs of our tenants and staff, signposting training and networking opportunities.	Annually
		Ensure that tenants and staff can avail of training opportunities and ensure these are well-advertised through noticeboards, emails, newsletters, word of mouth and through staff.	22/23

Objective	How	Specific Plan	When
Tackle the barriers to digital inclusion	**Radius Loan Tablets** Creating opportunities for tenants to borrow tablets to develop their digital skills.	Provide loan tablets for tenants who wish to avail of digital training and require a device.	Ongoing
		Promote the availability of a loan tablet to tenants with digital skills training available.	Ongoing
	Price Comparison To be able to signpost tenants to support them to compare costs for digital devices and connection services.	Develop a list of price/service comparison services for tenants to refer to should they wish to purchase their own device or review/join with an internet provider.	Annually
	Connectivity We will promote cross-departmental cooperation to consider improved digital inclusion opportunities in all services.	We will liaise with the Radius Development team to ensure that, where possible, digital access and connectivity is fit for purpose and future proof in our new homes.	Ongoing
		We will liase with our Assets Team to consider the capability of current connectivity services in our properties and to consider including this in planned works where possible. Ensuring that connections are fit for purpose and future proof.	Ongoing
Monitor, Evaluate and Measure the success of the Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan	**Monitoring** We will develop a robust monitoring system to gauge the success of all digital support throughout this project.	We will develop core questions for all digital projects for both pre and post project to see the benefit to those who have participated.	Ongoing
		We will monitor success against the Essential Digital Skills framework for our tenants.	Ongoing

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