Local Trust device, connectivity and procurement guide

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Everyone Connected started as an emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Its aims included buying devices with connectivity and distributing them in the community. Recipients were people who were experiencing digital and/or social exclusion.
The project created a legacy of knowledge. This included information around buying, training, distribution and the processes surrounding these stages. This document provides a summary of that knowledge. It is being shared so that communities can use it alongside their own knowledge, resources and networks to address digital exclusion in their own area.

Contents

Procurement

You will be aiming to get the most out of the funding you have while still considering the quality of product. The following points may help you maximise your buying power.

- When purchasing a small numbers of devices, high street retailers offer good value. For example, we found some good deals at Argos and Amazon.
- Computer Aid refurbish and distribute laptops. They are a non profit organisation whom you may wish to consider as a supplier. They offer low prices to charitable organisations (see their website for specifics).
- Bulk ordering can mean you gain good deals on devices and connectivity to the internet. To begin the bulk buying process we enacted a tendering process, wherein we asked a number of companies to provide their "best" quotes. Dixon's provided the most competitive quote for us, so we chose to buy through them. Tips for bulk buying include:

  - You should be clear on what specifications you need the device to have but be flexible about the brand/model.
  - You should check prices with a few suppliers to make sure you're getting the best price.
  - You don't necessarily get the best price when buying direct from the mobile network.
  - You might want to purchase connectivity and the actual devices from different companies in order to get the best deal.

For reference, in mid-2020 Good Things Foundation paid £150 - £250 per person for a device and connectivity. The amount varied as some people received a tablet and SIM card whilst others received a tablet and mifi device (wireless router that acts as a mobile Wi-Fi hotspot).

Devices and connectivity

Type of device

You should consider what type of device will be most suitable for your community recipients. We considered the following pros and cons when selecting devices.

Mobile phones

+ **Pros**: Portable, good for on-the-go browsing.
- **Cons**: Smaller screen might not be ideal for people with poor eyesight or mobility issues.

Tablets

+ **Pros**: Cost effective, usually simple to use, good for beginners.
- **Cons**: No keyboard means it's not ideal for homework or other activities that need lots of typing, lots of tablets in the UK don't accept sim cards.

Laptops

+ **Pros**: Good for more advanced users who need to study or job search.
- **Cons**: Can be expensive, more complicated to set up.

Device specification

The device we chose to distribute for the majority of recipients was a tablet with a sim slot or a tablet with a mifi device. We selected tablets with 8-10 inch screens and 16GB storage capacity.

We often used the models described here. However, this might not be right for your community. Talk to them and find out what their needs are.

Types of connectivity

We opted for SIM cards pre-loaded with data. This was because we did not want to sign recipients up to contracts. (Tip: make sure the device accepts a SIM card, or you can buy a mifi device plus SIM card. This will allow the recipients to use the internet wirelessly.)

Processes, training, support and delivery

Key considerations

There will always be a huge demand for devices, so it's important to think carefully about who will qualify for a device in your project. You may wish to read the qualifying criteria used in the Everyone Connected project, to help you to write your own.

When planning your project, your Local Trust team may want to consider the following:

- How are you assessing the need in your community?
- What criteria will you use to assess individual need?
- What is the working capacity of your team?
- How will you ensure personal data is treated legally and ethically (think GDPR)?
- What partnerships could you draw on for your project?
- Will you seek referrals from other organisations?
- How will you support people to use the devices safely?
- How will you measure the outcomes of your project?
- How will your organisation/the user continue to cover the ongoing cost of data in the long term?

Processes

Our guide document covers the processes we required online centres to follow when participating in the Everyone Connected project. It details how to:

- identify people who need devices
- set up devices so that they are ready for the recipient to use
- deliver the devices safely to the recipients (more info below).

Distribution to recipients

Always follow the current government guidelines when delivering devices. If delivering to people who are self-isolating, make sure to take extra precautions. You may want to refer to our guide for **delivering devices for people who are shielding**

If you are working with a number of volunteers or staff during a local or national lockdown, you might want to provide a letter to explain that they are performing an essential service. For example this is the **letter** we provided in 2020. We advised people to have a digital copy on their phone or a printed copy.

Support

If you are working to supply devices to people with low digital skills, it's important to provide remote support so that they can get online and gain confidence in using their device. You may provide this over the phone initially.

Our landing page houses documents you may find useful. The following resources may also be useful to you in providing ongoing digital support.

- **Learn My Way**
- **Make It Click**
- **Internet Matters**

You may also find these **Tips for data saving** useful, as there will be a limit to the amount of data available to the recipient.