

Digital Inclusion Practitioner Personas



These personas are not real individuals. Each one has been developed from themes and insights shared by practitioners during interviews as part of the research. The personas are intended to illustrate how digital exclusion shows up in practice and how practitioners respond, not to represent any single person or organisation.

Emma & Dorothy

Council worker working with older adults in rural communities



The challenge: Dorothy faces poor connectivity, fear of scams, and age-related changes that affect how she uses technology. As services become more digital, she worries about being left behind.

This story shows: How looking beneath the surface helps Emma identify what matters most and tailor support to Dorothy's needs.

[READ THE STORY](#) →

Alex & Carol

Housing coach working with adults with visual impairments



The challenge: Tenants like Carol face inaccessible digital services, affordability barriers, and technologies that do not always meet accessibility needs.

This story shows: How tailored, accessible support can build confidence and increase independence.

[READ THE STORY](#) →

Lucia & Miriam

Settlement support worker supporting refugee women



The challenge: Miriam faces language barriers, limited access to devices, trauma, and unfamiliar services that make digital services feel risky and difficult to use.

This story shows: How trust-based, culturally sensitive support helps people feel safe, build confidence, and use digital services more independently.

[READ THE STORY](#) →

Omar & David

Family services lead supporting young people in low-income households



The challenge: David has limited access to devices and data, shares technology at home, and faces competing pressures that affect learning and participation.

This story shows: How early, practical support can help young people learn, participate and stay connected.

[READ THE STORY](#) →

Emma & Dorothy



Who they are

Emma is a council worker supporting older adults in rural communities.

Dorothy lives in a rural area with poor internet connectivity and finds digital services hard to use.

Dorothy's experience:

"Out here the internet barely works, and with all the talk of scams I don't feel safe online. GP appointments, prescriptions, forms and banking can feel overwhelming when websites are complicated, passwords are hard to remember, and the connection keeps dropping. I worry that face-to-face help will disappear... I feel cut off from the world."

Emma: *"When I started thinking about Dorothy's situation it was clear it wasn't just one problem. Patchy rural internet, age-related health changes, fear of scams, and complicated online services all combined make digital tasks feel risky, tiring and difficult. Digital-first GP systems created extra barriers because they assumed people could easily access and navigate online services."*



Unfair systems
Structural inequalities



and unequal
treatment



Changes in life
circumstances



Trust in digital
use



Misfit between
tech and
people's context



How support is provided

To address the barriers Dorothy faced in accessing services and staying connected, Emma focused her support on three areas.

*"I focused first on improving Dorothy's internet access. Through a [social tariff](#), and a **MiFi device**, she was able to access a more reliable internet connection at home"*



Access



Engagement



Meaningful digital use

*"I supported Dorothy one-to-one, in **familiar settings** and at her pace. This helped digital tasks feel safer and more manageable. I encouraged her to attend **local community coffee mornings** where people could learn together"*

"Once she felt comfortable, we focused on digital tasks that mattered to her, like using the NHS App and staying connected via WhatsApp. We also talked about online safety and how to spot scams. As these tasks became more familiar and manageable, her confidence grew."

Emma & Dorothy

How change was measured

Emma needed to show the Council that the support was making a real difference and worth continuing. She focused on simple, consistent evidence that worked for people like Dorothy.



Emma:

*"I kept **simple records** of the MiFi devices we provided and checked in regularly with Dorothy and others receiving similar support. This helped me understand whether the devices were meeting people's needs.*

*To understand changes in **confidence and wellbeing**, I used a **short set of accessible questions** (for example, the **Good Things Foundation Indicators of Digital Inclusion**), alongside observations and **records of everyday digital tasks** such as booking GP appointments and ordering prescriptions.*

*Over time, this showed that Dorothy was becoming **more confident** using digital services, **staying safe online**, and knowing where to get help when needed."*



Access



Engagement



Meaningful digital use

Final message:

Emma's experience shows that digital inclusion works best when practitioners focus on what matters most and support people step-by-step. Access and skills are important starting points, but real impact comes from building trust and enabling meaningful digital use over time. This approach helps practitioners tailor support to people's needs and work effectively with community organisations and local partners. It highlights how digital-first services can create barriers for people, reinforcing the importance of maintaining accessible alternatives and investing in community-based digital inclusion support.

Further detail on the evidence and additional examples can be found in [the guide](#). We welcome your views on these materials. Please contact us at: PHW.Research@wales.nhs.uk

Alex & Carol



Who they are

Alex is a housing coach who helps people secure accommodation, navigate welfare and tenancy systems, and maintain independent living.

Carol has access to digital devices and services but struggles with fluctuating vision, screen fatigue, and accessibility barriers. This often leads to avoidance and reliance on others.

Carol's experience:

"Sight loss isn't the same for everyone. Some days I can see the shapes on the screen; other days it's all blur and guesswork. Bad layouts make tech stressful, knock my confidence, and leave me thinking, 'not today'."

Alex: *"Imagine using apps where buttons aren't labelled and error messages disappear before your screen reader finds them. Talking to Carol and sight loss organisations showed me how these barriers add up. The problem wasn't Carol's ability to use technology; many digital services simply weren't designed or tested with people experiencing sight loss in mind. I focused on what she needed, not what the technology 'expected' of her."*



Structural inequalities



Unfair systems and unequal treatment



Changes in life circumstances



Trust in digital use



Misfit between tech and people's context



How support is provided

To improve Carol's independence, Alex focused his support on the areas that would make the biggest difference.

*"I worked with Carol one-to-one, setting up screen magnification, voice navigation, and audio feedback tools so she could more easily read emails and navigate apps independently. **AbilityNet** **'My Computer My Way'** provides useful guides to make devices easier to use. Focusing on small wins helped build her confidence step by step."*



Digital skills

*"Our staff are stretched thin, so I introduced **peer support sessions** where confident tenants support others. It eases pressure on staff and builds a sense of community. Carol is now beginning to support others in the group too."*



Engagement

*"You really feel it when housing and other services don't join up. Tenants come to us about confusing apps, so I **keep raising accessibility issues**, sharing experiences through networks, and making sure their voices are heard. **Advocating** for better accessibility helps remove barriers and improve access in the long run."*



Support

How change was measured

Alex explained that the Housing Association measured change by looking at how the tenants' confidence grew in using their online services and whether accessibility changes helped them complete tasks independently.

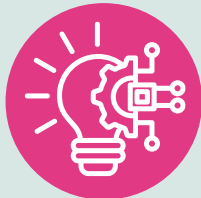


Alex:

*"I use the **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Usability Assessments** to check how accessible different digital tools are for tenants with sight loss. This helps me identify practical improvements that can make everyday tasks easier.*

When I spot accessibility barriers on websites or apps, I use examples from tenants' experiences to raise awareness and encourage improvements.

*After support is delivered, we look at how people are using online housing and tenant services, supported by **case studies** that capture the barriers they have overcome. With time, I saw Carol using accessibility tools more confidently and managing housing-related and everyday tasks more independently."*



Digital skills



Engagement



Support

Final message:

This example shows that digital exclusion for people with sight loss is often shaped by inaccessible services rather than individual capability. When digital tools are designed and tested with people who have different accessibility needs, people can participate more independently in everyday life. For practitioners, this highlights the importance of understanding accessibility barriers, advocating for better design, and working with specialist organisations. For service providers, it reinforces how improving accessibility can create social value through greater independence, participation and inclusion.

Further detail on the evidence and additional examples can be found in [the guide](#). We welcome your views on these materials.

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Lucia & Miriam



Who they are

Lucia is a refugee resettlement worker; she supports young refugee women.

Miriam arrived in the UK a year ago, and like many other refugees, she struggles to use essential digital services.

Miriam's experience:

"I often feel alone. When I arrived, I couldn't afford a device and relied on others for basic tasks. English isn't my first language, even if most websites assume it is. Online services still feel confusing; I'd love to manage things myself."

Lucia: *"Most women I meet arrive with no phone or laptop, so getting a device is step one. Working with Miriam showed me that's not enough. She was rebuilding her life after being displaced, a device alone was never going to be enough. Understanding the language barriers, housing stress, and emotional challenges she faced changed how I approached digital support. I learned that trust, language and cultural understanding often come before digital skills."*



Structural inequalities



Unfair systems and unequal treatment



Changes in life circumstances



Trust in digital use



Misfit between tech and people's context



How support is provided

Based on her understanding of Miriam's situation, Lucia provided patient, culturally sensitive support tailored to her needs.

*"We had already created a women-only room with laptops, internet, and privacy. When Miriam first came in, there was **no pressure**, we simply showed her the space and introduced her to other women there."*



Access

*"One of the biggest breakthroughs came from working with **interpreters and volunteers who shared her cultural background**. We used translated materials where possible and adapted explanations to match her literacy. Women who shared similar experiences and spoke her language helped build trust slowly and respectfully. **Feeling safe makes people much more likely to get involved.**"*



Support

*"Once she saw we weren't rushing her, that we had **simple step-by-step guides in her language**, and that **no question was 'too basic'**, she started to relax. We introduced her to **'Learn My Way'** free digital skills platform, and that's when her confidence and interest in learning began to grow."*



Digital skills

Lucia & Miriam

How change was measured

Many of the women Lucia supports have limited literacy and don't speak English as a first language, so standard assessment tools aren't always suitable. Instead, she used everyday observations and simple engagement data to understand what was changing and to demonstrate impact.



Lucia:

"We tracked how many women were coming into the space, how often they returned, and how long they stayed. This helped us show the scale of the need and who we were reaching."

Most progress showed up in **small, observable moments** rather than formal tests, like completing tasks with less prompting, working more independently, and being more willing to try something unfamiliar. **'Learn My Way'** also offers a way to track progress through the tasks people completed on the platform.

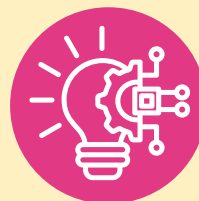
As her confidence grew, Miriam became more comfortable using digital services while continuing to use language support when needed. We also saw women learning from each other, building friendships and support networks, and feeling less isolated."



Access



Support



Digital skills

Final message:

Lucia deepened her understanding of how resettlement experiences shape digital exclusion, while strengthening partnerships with trusted intermediaries who could provide culturally and linguistically appropriate support. This helped build a stronger case for investing in trusted spaces, interpreters, and community-led models of support. For refugee women, digital inclusion is closely tied to trust, safety, and lived experience. Culturally sensitive, trauma-aware support can help people feel safer, build confidence, and engage with digital services more independently.

Further detail on the evidence and additional examples can be found in [the guide](#). We welcome your views on these materials. Please contact us at: PHW.Research@wales.nhs.uk

Omar & David



Who they are

Omar is a family service lead in the third sector who works with schools and families to support digitally excluded children.

David is a 13-year-old from a low-income, single-parent household.

David's experience:

"We run out of data halfway through the month and share one tablet at home. Sometimes I use free Wi-Fi in places like cafés, but getting there isn't always easy and there's the cost of being there too. Everyone at school assumes you've got Wi-Fi and a laptop. It's unfair, and it makes doing my homework hard, even though I like learning."

Omar: *"When I started working with David's family, his problems weren't obvious. He liked school and seemed confident, so people assumed he was fine. But after his dad lost his job, they couldn't afford broadband anymore and had to sell most of their devices. The pressures built up, he started to fall behind, despite trying his best. It wasn't just affecting schoolwork; it was affecting his confidence, participation, and sense of belonging among his peers."*



Structural inequalities



Unfair systems and unequal treatment



Changes in life circumstances



Trust in digital use



Misfit between tech and people's context

How support is provided

Omar focused his support on three areas that would help David participate more fully in school.

*"David mainly used a tablet, not a laptop. People often assume young people are automatically digitally skilled, but that's not always the case. I worked with his teachers to **build his confidence** using laptops for schoolwork and supported his dad to **access** the school's digital platforms so he could support David's learning at home."*



Digital skills

*"I sourced a device for David through the **National Device Bank** and **explored social tariff options** with his dad. I also encouraged him to use the **library computers and Wi-Fi** to stay connected while he waited for the laptop. Not every family can rely on public Wi-Fi or afford social tariffs, so support needs to fit their circumstances."*



Access

*"Teachers worried he'd just use the laptop for games or social media. I explained that's often a useful **'hook'** to help him feel included and build confidence, which makes it easier for him to engage with lessons and complete schoolwork. **Building trust with young people helps them feel included, develop confidence, and engage more meaningfully with technology.**"*



Engagement

How change was measured

Omar uses the *Minimum Digital Living Standard (MDLS)* framework to assess whether David has the building blocks needed to participate fully in education. He shared this approach with David's teachers to help track progress over time.



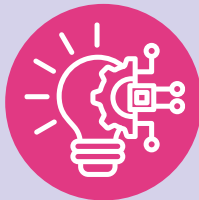
Omar:

*"The **MDLS** helped me assess whether David had the access, devices, skills, and support needed for learning. I've been **checking in every couple of months**, asking teachers what has changed; things like needing less help to get started, growing confidence using a laptop, and asking for help earlier rather than giving up. Teachers reported that he was participating more consistently in lessons and completing homework regularly. David also felt less worried about falling behind.*

*I also looked at wider changes, including attendance, participation in school activities, and communication between home and school. I **compared previous and recent notes** to identify where more support was needed, rather than assuming the problem had been solved."*



Access



Digital skills



Engagement

Final message:

For young people, digital exclusion is often hidden but can have a significant impact on learning, participation, wellbeing, and belonging. Having the devices, connectivity, skills and support needed to learn online can help young people engage more fully in education and reduce stress on families. It can improve communication between home and school and increase confidence in using digital services. This highlights the social value of digital inclusion through improved learning, family wellbeing and participation. For practitioners, it reinforces the importance of identifying hidden digital exclusion and working closely with schools and families.

Further detail on the evidence and additional examples can be found in [the guide](#). We welcome your views on these materials.

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