

Tackling digital inclusion means designing services that meet all your users' needs

The acceleration of digital ways of working during the pandemic has seen digital inclusion rise up the board agenda.

Board leaders need a shared understanding of what digital inclusion means and clarity on their priorities for action. This briefing defines digital inclusion and highlights practical tips from members.

1

Building digital literacy

Self-assessment tools can help the board understand the varying digital literacy of staff and **provide tailored training**.

Volunteer digital ambassadors have been recruited by some trusts to help patients and service users access their services, who in turn can help others once their confidence is improved.

User-friendly guidelines can help both staff and patients using a digital service for the first time.

2

Designing for inclusion

Boards need to **get closer to their users' digital experience** to understand the problems they face.

Building **diverse digital teams**, and prioritising design skills, will help build services accessible to more people.

Involving patients, service-users and staff in the co-design of services from the outset will help identify barriers to access and prevent people slipping through the net.

3

Improving user access

Some trusts have **provided users with individual devices** and supported improvements in local connectivity infrastructure.

Digital outreach services allow trusts to go into the communities they serve and provide digital services to patients and service users without devices or internet connections.

Partnerships with local authorities, voluntary organisations and the private sector have been forged by some trusts to tackle **digital poverty**.



Digital inclusion isn't about 'either or' – the strategy should be digital for those who can, so you can spend more time with those that can't. PUBLIC DIGITAL

NHS Digital design principles for digital inclusion

- 1 Go to where people are:** to have more open and honest conversations.
- 2 Work with people who know your service users best:** join up with carers, teachers, support workers and other professionals.
- 3 Co-design:** from the initial discovery phase to live service and beyond.
- 4 Build solutions that fit into people's everyday lives:** *make it as easy as possible.*
- 5 Use existing tools and resources wherever possible:** digital inclusion must be embedded across all services.
- 6 Outcomes first, then digital:** *what will good look like?*
- 7 Watch your language:** even *mentioning the word 'digital' can act as a barrier.*



Diverse teams build better services, which are accessible by more people. Recruiting research and design skills is equally crucial if you're serious about designing services that meet people's different needs. PUBLIC DIGITAL

Questions for boards

- Do you understand the current digital skills capabilities within your workforce?
- What assumptions are you making about your users and how they access your services?
- How will you know if patients and service users are struggling to access your services?
- Whose voices are missing when the board reviews its digital user experience?
- How is your organisation ensuring it is recruiting diverse teams?
- How will you go about finding users who access your services in unconventional ways?
- Is digital inclusion considered from the outset of your digital projects?

Finding out more

The Digital Boards programme, delivered in partnership with Public Digital and supported by Health Education England and NHSX, has engaged board members from over 160 trusts over the last year. This briefing is the second in a series to capture some of the insights and actions board have committed to take to improve their collective experience of the digital agenda.

- **Read** our [guides](#) on digital leadership hot topics
- **Visit** our [knowledge hub](#) for blogs, case studies and other board resources on digital transformation
- **Join** one of our virtual events and sign up to our [Digital Boards leadership network](#)
- **Contact** louise.stopford@nhsproviders.org to book a free, tailored board development session on leading digital transformation.