

# APPLE COLLECTIVE

## Addressing Poverty with Lived Experience

### DIGITALLY DISCONNECTED, TRACEY HERRINGTON, THRIVE TEESSIDE AND PHIL PARKES, EXPERT CITIZENS.

**Figures suggest that over 1 million households do not have any internet connection in the UK and 5.3 million people do not access the internet at all.** There are a number of reasons as to why people may not be connected: affording devices and data, lacking confidence and skills and opting out of being connected. One in five adults lack the digital skills needed to work safely and effectively online (Digital Infrastructure, Connectivity and Accessibility, Volume 685 debated in Parliament Thursday 3 December 2020)

#### BEING CONNECTED – A NECESSITY AND NOT A LUXURY

Reliance on being connected is part of modern society, whether allowing us to work from home, home school children, log on to Universal Credit accounts, search for jobs, online shopping, exercise to Joe Wicks, keep in touch with people, check the weather forecast, access services, complete e-consult forms with doctors, move home, bid for properties... Modern society could not function as effectively without having the ability to be connected.

#### WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO KEEP PEOPLE DIGITALLY CONNECTED?

**For modern society to function effectively, the recognition of digital connectivity needs to be seen as indispensable as fuel or water.** It needs to be considered as a utility as it is an essential service. The DWP need claimants to be online to access their Universal Credit journals and look for jobs, banks are increasingly asking customers to go on line, social housing advertises services online and is moving towards reporting repairs also online, information regarding a host of other services is generally available through websites and social media pages and doctors surgeries are keen to ensure patients complete e-consult forms.

With this in mind, the cost and responsibility for ensuring people have the skills and are able to be connected could collaboratively lie with:

- Government.
- Housing providers.
- The DWP.
- Broadband providers – they make a lot of profit and could re-invest in the community as part of their corporate social responsibility.



### 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](http://www.aplecollective.com)

## A LOCAL COMMUNITY RESPONSE TO ADDRESS THE DIGITAL DIVIDE. DARREN LEIGHTON- HARTLEPOOL ACTION LAB.

Hartlepool Action Lab have worked across the town to provide a local response to the heightened levels of digital exclusion caused by the pandemic. An established local partner organisation has become registered with OFCOM to provide broadband which means that a local organisation can control the cost and contract of anyone who wishes to sign up. This gives people a lot more freedom when facing hardship as they are not required to enter a long-term contract agreement with an ISP. They can enter a rolling 1 month contract and stop anytime, as well as re-start anytime.

We were asked if we had seen any other responses like the one in Hartlepool to this issue and we have not. This is not to say that it isn't happening elsewhere, but we haven't seen other community led responses to the digital divide, as a whole, as of right now. We were also asked if we had found that a person's motivations for becoming connected digitally, directly correlated with their age. We had not seen this correlation and in fact had found that it was lower-income communities who had the least motivation to be digitally connected. This is based upon anecdotal evidence only.

## FRAME COLLECTIVE CIC- ROSA ROBINSON

Frame Collective CIC is a not-for-profit company specialising in people-centred research, creative engagement and inclusive innovation. Our work focuses on people's experiences of health and social inequalities. We support communities to play active roles in creating solutions to address the problems that affect them. Our recent projects have focused on menstruation equality and education and 'less heard from' communities' experiences of Covid-19. We are currently researching community-led responses to data poverty with Local Trust and will publish our findings in July 2021.

### Frame's current research on community-led action on data poverty is exploring:

- What's being done to help get communities online,
- What supports community groups and organisations to take action, and
- What limits their efforts and holds them back.

Community groups are leading action to get people online but face barriers: buying and distributing data is too complicated and resource-heavy for small organisations and lack of appropriate infrastructure in shared accommodation can create additional challenges for groups addressing data poverty.

### Solutions to get people online post-covid may need to consider:

- The importance of public WiFi:
- How we must ensure that WiFi is widely available, accessible, secure and safe. How can we do that?

The research report will be published by Local Trust in June/July 2021 at [framecollective.org.uk](https://framecollective.org.uk)

# Local Trust

## ELLIE POPE- LOCAL TRUST

Poor digital connectivity is a key indicator of the 225 'left behind' neighbourhoods. Digital exclusion hamper's peoples quality of life and exacerbates so many other aspects of social disadvantage. The digital divide is therefore a priority of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods, who are committed to improving social and economic outcomes for residents in these areas on a hyper-local level, ensuring communities are stronger and more resilient in the future. Local Trust, as secretariat to the APPG, has recently commissioned research on behalf of the Operation Wifi Alliance into Community-led action on data poverty. Policy recommendations from this report will feed into the APPG's report on digital connectivity and suggested avenues of further research will feed into Good Things Foundation's Data Poverty Lab. We are committed to continuing to contribute to further research, and advocacy, in order to address the digital divide.

## #OPERATIONWIFI DAN OLIVER- STARTING POINT.

"Operation WiFi is a national alliance of people and organisations, campaigning for free and affordable Internet access for our neighbours and communities. We connect organisations to support locally led solutions to data poverty and digital exclusion, as well as calling for a 'Citizen SIM' databank to allow for collective sharing of mobile data."

Operation WiFi alliance calls for a national databank, allowing people to donate their unused or excess mobile data for those who need it most. The idea of data donation and involving communities in this process is a positive response to help address the issues that lead to a digital divide.

### Considerations to think about include:

- How the databank would be a part of a much wider picture of communities tackling the digital divide.
- How we support local groups and organisations to support those with lived experience of digital exclusion.

You can find out more by contacting [operationwifi@corganisers.org.uk](mailto:operationwifi@corganisers.org.uk) or you can sign up to the alliance at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/OpWiFi>."



The graphic features a teal background with a network diagram of nodes and lines. The Operation WiFi logo is in the top right. The text reads: "Joy has spent over £30 a week on a Pay As You Go phone to keep in touch with her daughter abroad during lockdown. People like Joy need increased access to affordable WiFi. We are asking for a national databank where people with surplus data can donate it to others through a Citizen Sim initiative. This is a sustainable solution to a long-held issue that has been exacerbated during lockdown."

# TURN2US

## FIGHTING UK POVERTY

## TURN2US- ABBY MEADOWS

As Secretariat of the APPG on Universal Credit, we are committed to having lived experience voices at our sessions, and have been inviting people to them for over a year. We believe doing this is a meaningful way of combining the power of lived expertise and professional expertise. It is a worthy way of us being allies to lived experience led organisations like APLE Collective.

## TO WATCH THE REFLECTIONS, FEEDBACK AND PANEL SESSION FROM OUR WEBINAR:

## CLICK HERE