

Overview and Scrutiny



Digital Inclusion in Education Task and Finish Group Agenda

6.30 pm, Tuesday, 8 March 2022

Civic Suite, Catford, London, SE6 4RU and

online at: <https://lewisham.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcasts>

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This meeting is an open meeting and all items on the agenda may be audio recorded and/or filmed.

Part 1

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Digital Inclusion in Education Task and Finish Group Members

Members of the committee, listed below, are summoned to attend the meeting to be held on Tuesday, 8 March 2022.

Kim Wright, Chief Executive
28 February 2022

Councillor Colin Elliott (Chair)	
Councillor Obajimi Adefiranye	
Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin	
Councillor Caroline Kalu	
Councillor Paul Maslin	
Clive Caseley	PGR (Secondary Schools)

MINUTES OF THE DIGITAL INCLUSION IN EDUCATION TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Monday, 5 July 2021 at 5.00 pm

PRESENT: Councillors Colin Elliott (Chair), Obajimi Adefiranye, Liz Johnston-Franklin, Caroline Kalu, Paul Maslin and Clive Caseley (PGR, Secondary Schools).

ALSO PRESENT: Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager), John Bardens (Scrutiny Manager) and Cheryl Thorley (Meeting administration support apprentice).

1. Confirmation of Chair

Resolved: that Councillor Colin Elliot be confirmed as Chair of the task and finish group.

2. Declarations of interest

Clive Caseley (PGR, Secondary Schools) declared an interest as a Governor of Forest Hill School.

3. Scoping report

Cllr Elliott, Chair, introduced the item by providing an outline of the original proposal for a task and finish group (TFG) on digital inclusion in education.

1.1 The intention of the proposal was to look into the levels of digital inclusion among those pupils most in need, with a view to improving their educational outcomes – particularly those who had been identified as underachieving prior to lockdown. The proposal was, among other things, for the TFG to support schools identify these pupils across a range of year groups.

1.2 It was suggested that the TFG could learn from the good practice that emerged during the pandemic to help support those children and young people that might need to complete more work at home as part of the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. This would include how to identify, implement and share best practice and how it would be evaluated as part of the recovery.

1.3 It was noted that the work of the TFG is timely and important as we are still dealing with the fallout from the pandemic and that it will help us understand how best to support schools and pupils going forwards. It was also noted that there is a link to some digital inclusion work being carried out by the Mayor and the intention was for these two work streams to complement each other.

The committee went on to discuss the scoping paper and potential areas to explore. The following key points were noted:

1.4 Lewisham Learning (the Lewisham School Improvement Partnership) will be a key stakeholder to engage with for relevant information and data.

- 1.5 The TFG noted a number of potential queries for Lewisham Learning regarding: the plans for any unallocated laptops received through the recent Government laptop distribution schemes; and the recent crowdfunding campaign for digital devices for Lewisham schools.
- 1.6 The TFG suggested also focussing on the technology that schools use and how this might be used to help alert teachers to pupils who may be having issues with digital access.
- 1.7 The TFG noted that there can also be variation in the ability and confidence of teachers to make the best use of digital technology in schools.
- 1.8 It was noted that the survey carried out earlier in the year by Lewisham Learning looking at the numbers of children with devices and internet access might have more detailed data.
- 1.9 The TFG noted a number of barriers to digital inclusion for children and young people, including: having space at home to study; relying on mobile phones for internet access; not having English as a first language; and schools' awareness of the best digital platforms for learning.
- 1.10 The TFG expressed a particular interest in looking at the support available for those children and young people who have been digitally excluded and are soon due to take exams.
- 1.11 It was noted that there were recently as many as 279,000 pupils self-isolating across England and even if the rules change it will continue to be an issue for some pupils and schools.
- 1.12 The TFG noted that it would be important to look at the ongoing issue of children lacking appropriate devices and access noting that schools will often have an insight into these issues from the problems that they see.
- 1.13 The TFG also suggested looking at the digital inclusion issues faced by children and young people in temporary accommodation.
- 1.14 The TFG noted the importance of families being made aware of any discounted internet tariffs available. It was noted that some parents can find it difficult to ask for help when they need it.
- 1.15 It was noted that research has shown that live online teaching is more effective and that the ability to switch to live online teaching was a key priority for schools that have been doing well.
- 1.16 The TFG also suggested looking into the possibility of community areas or support hubs for pupils without appropriate digital access.
- 1.17 The TFG suggested liaising with Youth First about their experience of digital inclusion in informal education.

Resolved: that the scoping report, including the key lines of enquiry and the timeline for the completion of the group's work be agreed.

Meeting ended at 5.50pm

Chair's signature

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Digital Inclusion in Education Task & Finish Group

Declarations of Interest

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Director of Law, Governance and Elections

Outline and recommendations

Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

1. Summary

- 1.1. Members must declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda. There are three types of personal interest referred to in the Council's Member Code of Conduct:
 - (1) Disclosable pecuniary interests
 - (2) Other registerable interests
 - (3) Non-registerable interests.
- 1.2. Further information on these is provided in the body of this report.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Members are asked to declare any personal interest they have in any item on the agenda.

3. Disclosable pecuniary interests

3.1 These are defined by regulation as:

- (a) Employment, trade, profession or vocation of a relevant person* for profit or gain
- (b) Sponsorship –payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than by the Council) within the 12 months prior to giving notice for inclusion in the register in respect of expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member or towards your election expenses (including payment or financial benefit from a Trade Union).
- (c) Undischarged contracts between a relevant person* (or a firm in which they are a partner or a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest) and the Council for goods, services or works.
- (d) Beneficial interests in land in the borough.
- (e) Licence to occupy land in the borough for one month or more.
- (f) Corporate tenancies – any tenancy, where to the member’s knowledge, the Council is landlord and the tenant is a firm in which the relevant person* is a partner, a body corporate in which they are a director, or in the securities of which they have a beneficial interest.
- (g) Beneficial interest in securities of a body where:
 - (a) that body to the member’s knowledge has a place of business or land in the borough; and
 - (b) either:
 - (i) the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - (ii) if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which the relevant person* has a beneficial interest exceeds 1/100 of the total issued share capital of that class.

*A relevant person is the member, their spouse or civil partner, or a person with whom they live as spouse or civil partner.

4. Other registerable interests

4.1 The Lewisham Member Code of Conduct requires members also to register the following interests:

- (a) Membership or position of control or management in a body to which you were appointed or nominated by the Council
- (b) Any body exercising functions of a public nature or directed to charitable purposes, or whose principal purposes include the influence of public opinion or policy, including any political party
- (c) Any person from whom you have received a gift or hospitality with an estimated value of at least £25.

5. Non registerable interests

- 5.1. Occasions may arise when a matter under consideration would or would be likely to affect the wellbeing of a member, their family, friend or close associate more than it would affect the wellbeing of those in the local area generally, but which is not required to be registered in the Register of Members' Interests (for example a matter concerning the closure of a school at which a Member's child attends).

6. Declaration and impact of interest on members' participation

- 6.1. Where a member has any registerable interest in a matter and they are present at a meeting at which that matter is to be discussed, they must declare the nature of the interest at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered. The declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. If the matter is a disclosable pecuniary interest the member must take not part in consideration of the matter and withdraw from the room before it is considered. They must not seek improperly to influence the decision in any way. **Failure to declare such an interest which has not already been entered in the Register of Members' Interests, or participation where such an interest exists, is liable to prosecution and on conviction carries a fine of up to £5000**
- 6.2. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest they must still declare the nature of the interest to the meeting at the earliest opportunity and in any event before the matter is considered, but they may stay in the room, participate in consideration of the matter and vote on it unless paragraph 6.3 below applies.
- 6.3. Where a member has a registerable interest which falls short of a disclosable pecuniary interest, the member must consider whether a reasonable member of the public in possession of the facts would think that their interest is so significant that it would be likely to impair the member's judgement of the public interest. If so, the member must withdraw and take no part in consideration of the matter nor seek to influence the outcome improperly.
- 6.4. If a non-registerable interest arises which affects the wellbeing of a member, their, family, friend or close associate more than it would affect those in the local area generally, then the provisions relating to the declarations of interest and withdrawal apply as if it were a registerable interest.
- 6.5. Decisions relating to declarations of interests are for the member's personal judgement, though in cases of doubt they may wish to seek the advice of the Monitoring Officer.

7. Sensitive information

- 7.1. There are special provisions relating to sensitive interests. These are interests the disclosure of which would be likely to expose the member to risk of violence or intimidation where the Monitoring Officer has agreed that such interest need not be registered. Members with such an interest are referred to the Code and advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer in advance.

8. Exempt categories

- 8.1. There are exemptions to these provisions allowing members to participate in decisions notwithstanding interests that would otherwise prevent them doing so. These include:-
- (a) Housing – holding a tenancy or lease with the Council unless the matter relates to your particular tenancy or lease; (subject to arrears exception)
 - (b) School meals, school transport and travelling expenses; if you are a parent or

guardian of a child in full time education, or a school governor unless the matter relates particularly to the school your child attends or of which you are a governor

- (c) Statutory sick pay; if you are in receipt
- (d) Allowances, payment or indemnity for members
- (e) Ceremonial honours for members
- (f) Setting Council Tax or precept (subject to arrears exception).

9. Report author and contact

- 9.1. Jeremy Chambers, Director of Law, Governance and Elections
jeremy.chambers@lewisham.gov.uk, 020 8314 7648



Digital Inclusion in Education Task & Finish Group (TFG)

Report title: Digital Inclusion in Education TFG – final report

Date: 8 March 2022

Key decision: No.

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Assistant Chief Executive (Scrutiny Manager)

Outline and recommendations

Following consideration of a broad range of evidence, as set out in the timeline of engagement below, Members of the TFG are requested to discuss the attached report and agree potential recommendations:

The TFG is asked to:

- Consider, comment on, and agree the attached report
- Agree any recommendations to be made as part of the review.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

The subject of this Task and Finish Group (TFG) was proposed by Cllr Colin Elliott.

The subject and membership of the TFG were agreed by Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 26 May 2021.

The scope and key lines of enquiry of the review were agreed on 5th July 2021.

Between July and February, the TFG has carried out around 10 meetings and engagement sessions with around 20 different stakeholders in Lewisham and elsewhere. This included:

- Lewisham Learning – 21st July
- School leaders from St Matthew Academy, Bonus Pastor, Forest Hill – September
- Carnegie UK Trust – 22nd September
- Socitm – 6th October
- Youth First – 4th November
- School leaders from Sedgehill and Elfrida – November
- Glasgow City Council – 23rd November
- EdTech Consultant, Lawrence Tijjani – 11th January 2022
- School governors from (Grinling Gibbons and Lucas Vale, Kilmorie, St Bartholomew's, Forest Hill) 18th January 2022
- Key council officers – 2nd February 2022

1. Summary

1.1. The report attached at appendix A sets out the key findings of the Task and Finish Group.

2. Recommendations

2.1. The Task and Finish Group is asked to:

- Consider, comment on and agree the final report.
- Agree any recommendations to be made as part of the review.

3. Policy context

3.1. The Council's *Corporate Strategy (2018-2022)* outlines the Council's vision to deliver for residents over the next four years. Delivering this strategy includes the following priority outcomes that relate to digital inclusion in education:

- *Giving children and young people the best start in life - Every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education, and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.*
- *Building an inclusive local economy - Everyone can access high-quality job opportunities, with decent pay and security in our thriving and inclusive local economy.*

- 3.2. The committee should also note and take into account the four strategic themes at the heart of the Council's response to the impact of the pandemic, which support what we want for every single resident and that we know are what we need to focus on locally. These four strategic themes are: An economically sound future; a healthy and well future; a greener future; and a future we all have a part in. The first of these is particularly relevant to digital inclusion:
- *An economically sound future: We are working to get the borough back in business, with a future where everyone has the jobs and skills they need to get the best that London has to offer. We are a borough with businesses that are adaptable and prepared for change, a thriving local economy that sees 'local' as the first and best choice, with digital inclusion at the heart of our plans. We do all we can to support residents into jobs that pay fairly and provide families with the opportunities and security they deserve.*

4. Background

- 4.1. The Task and Finish Group (TFG) was proposed by Councillor Colin Elliott and agreed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 26th May along with the membership of the group. The TFG have received evidence from a range of sources and activities and have produced a report summarising their findings attached at appendix A.
- 4.2. The TFG are being asked to review and agree the final report summarising the evidence received and agree any recommendations they wish to make.

5. Financial implications

- 5.1. There are no direct financial implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Recommendations from the Task and Finish Group may have financial implications and these will need to be considered in due course.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1. The Council's Constitution provides at paragraph 6.11, Article 6 that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may from time to time appoint sub-committees, to be known as task and finish groups which will exist for a period of no less than 3 months, nor more than 12 months from the date of their creation. It further adds that "Any task and finish group shall consist of 5 members and be established for the purpose of examining a particular issue in depth. The terms of reference of any task and finish group shall be agreed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which shall also appoint members to it."

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1. The Equality Act 2010 brought together all previous equality legislation in England, Scotland and Wales. The Act included a new public sector equality duty, replacing the separate duties relating to race, disability and gender equality. The duty came into force on 6 April 2011. It covers the following nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 7.2. The Council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 7.3. There may be equalities implications arising from recommendations made by the Task and Finish Group and the Council will need to give due consideration to this in their response.

8. Climate change and environmental implications

- 8.1. There are no direct climate change or environmental implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Recommendations considered by the Task and Finish Group may have climate change implications and these will need to be given due consideration.

9. Crime and disorder implications

- 9.1. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Matters considered by the Task and Finish Group may have crime and disorder implications and these will need to be given due consideration when any recommendations are considered.

10. Health and wellbeing implications

- 10.1. There are no direct health and wellbeing implications arising from the implementation of the recommendations in this report. Matters considered by the Task and Finish Group may have health and wellbeing implications and these will need to be given due consideration when any recommendations are considered.

11. Report author and contact

- 11.1. If you have any questions about this report please contact:
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Timothy.Andrew@lewisham.gov.uk (02083147916)

Overview and Scrutiny



Final report of the Digital Inclusion in Education scrutiny task & finish group



February 2022



1. Chair's Introduction

- 1.1. To follow.

2. Background

- 2.1. In March 2021, Cllr Colin Elliott proposed a Task and Finish Group to consider: how can we identify lack of [digital] access and improve connectivity, along with educational outcomes, for those pupils most in need?
- 2.2. Following acceptance by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 May 2021, the scope for the Digital Inclusion in Education Task & Finish Group (TFG) was agreed on 5th July 2021.
- 2.3. The initial proposal was prompted by the Mayor of London's work on digital exclusion for school children, which has since led to, among other things, offers of more affordable data and devices for schools – through working with the London Grid for Learning (LGfL – a non-profit charity that provides digital services to schools).¹
- 2.4. The main aims of the Task and Finish Group were to identify failings in internet access and Wi-Fi connectivity relied upon by pupils, particularly those already identified as under-achieving prior to the pandemic, and who will need to catch-up via on line learning outside of the school environment – mainly at home.
- 2.5. The belief was that this proposal would help to identify and better support the educational achievements, and outcomes, for those Lewisham pupils who will be reliant on a good network connection, both now and in the future.
- 2.6. During the review, the TFG has heard from a range of stakeholders from across the borough, including schools, school governors, and council officers. The TFG also took into account the evidence on digital inclusion gathered by the Mayors' *Actively Anti-Racist Advisory Commission* in its recent engagement with pupils and parents.
- 2.7. The TFG is extremely grateful for the all the time, insight, and ideas provided by everyone who has been involved in the review, including those from outside the borough who have kindly shared their experience and expertise.
- 2.8. There have been many examples of good practice identified, in particular in relation to the rapid adoption of digital teaching methods by schools during the peak of pandemic. The TFG heard how some local schools went from mainly paper-based work-packs during the first lockdown (in March 2020) to nearly every pupil having a device by the time of the second lockdown (in November 2020).
- 2.9. Many schools also put in place training and support to upskill staff and parents as new tools and platforms were rolled out. And Lewisham Learning, the school improvement partnership for Lewisham, also provided borough-wide training and peer-to-peer support for teachers and headteachers during the pandemic.
- 2.10. The TFG also heard, however, about the difficulties faced accessing devices through

¹ [Mayor of London and London Councils work to help close digital divide](#), February 2021

the Department for Education's laptop distribution scheme – initially in terms of allocation but now also in terms of device reliability and long-term sustainability. A local secondary school noted, for example, that of the 140 laptops initially received only 60 of them were still useable. Lewisham Learning also specifically highlighted the sustainability of devices and software as one of the three highest priority issues for local schools.

- 2.11. Through external engagement the TFG also heard concerns about the risk that technological change could deepen inequalities and undermine other strategies if digital exclusion is not addressed. One external expert also stressed the need for a long-term sustainable strategy from the Government.
- 2.12. As part of the review, the TFG also engaged with Glasgow City Council to discuss the learning and teaching elements of the City's digital strategy, which, it was noted, looked at digital as representing a global revolution affecting the whole economy, presenting major economic and societal challenges, but also enormous opportunities to grow the economy and employment.
- 2.13. The TFG also notes the Department for Education's most recent laptop distribution initiative – aimed at care leavers, children with a social worker and children arriving from Afghanistan² – and hopes that this investment will have a long-term positive impact.
- 2.14. Nonetheless, following the TFG's consideration of a wide range of evidence, this report sets out the key findings and a number of recommendations intended to build on the progress made during the pandemic to increase levels of digital inclusion in education.

3. Policy content

- 3.1. The Council's [Corporate Strategy \(2018-2022\)](#) outlines the Council's vision to deliver for residents over the next four years. Delivering this strategy includes the following priority outcomes that relate to digital inclusion in education:
 - *Giving children and young people the best start in life - Every child has access to an outstanding and inspiring education, and is given the support they need to keep them safe, well and able to achieve their full potential.*
 - *Building an inclusive local economy - Everyone can access high-quality job opportunities, with decent pay and security in our thriving and inclusive local economy.*
- 3.2. The committee should also note and take into account the four strategic themes at the heart of the Council's response to the impact of the pandemic: *An economically sound future; a healthy and well future; a greener future; and a future we all have a part in.*
- 3.3. The first of these is the most relevant to digital inclusion in education:
 - *An economically sound future: We are working to get the borough back in business, with a future where everyone has the jobs and skills they need to get the best that London has to offer. We are a borough with businesses that are adaptable and*

² DfE, [Care leavers and disadvantaged pupils to benefit from £126 million investment in new laptops and tablets](#), October 2021.

prepared for change, a thriving local economy that sees 'local' as the first and best choice, with digital inclusion at the heart of our plans. We do all we can to support residents into jobs that pay fairly and provide families with the opportunities and security they deserve

4. Recommendations

- 4.1. The Digital Inclusion in Education Task and Finish Group:
- 4.2. *Encourages the council's education department and schools to continue to make the most of London Grid for Learning (LGfL) offers on more affordable devices, and in particular the special data and device offers being developed through the work of the Mayor of London, and to make sure that all schools are aware of the offers available.*
- 4.3. *Recommends that the council's education department and schools produce information and guidance for parents and pupils on where and how to access affordable data (e.g. social tariffs) and devices (e.g. refurbished), as well as where and how they can access local digital support (i.e. libraries, housing providers) and skills (adult education). This should also include guidance on the specifications of devices/hardware that pupils will need and guidance on making the best use of the software and platforms commonly used by schools.*
- 4.4. *Recommends that the council's education department states to schools that it is best practice to include guidance on digital platforms in the induction process for new parents, and to consider issues relating to digital inclusion as part of end-of-term evaluations for each subject.*
- 4.5. *Recommends that the council's education department engages with other local authorities, through the Mayor of London's digital inclusion programme and the LGA's digital inclusion forum (and other similar national forums) about best practice and benchmarking in relation to digital inclusion in education.*
- 4.6. *Recommends that the council's education department and schools produce information and guidance on the best digital platforms, tools and websites for learning, particularly in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).*
- 4.7. *Recommends that any information and guidance for parents is available in different languages and signposted to those most likely to experience barriers to digital inclusion – such as families with children with SEND, families with English as an additional language (EAL), and families living in temporary accommodation.*
- 4.8. *Recommends that the council routinely takes digital inclusion into account in Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) assessments, including the digital skills of parents/carers, and consider the adoption of a definition (see Chair's introduction) of digital inclusion to better identify pupils who need support.*
- 4.9. *Recommends that the council's education, housing and IT departments explore the feasibility of providing Wi-Fi in council-managed temporary accommodation and hostel accommodation.*
- 4.10. *Recommends that the council's education and IT departments and schools explore the feasibility of at-scale and ongoing technical support (such as a dedicated IT helpline) for teachers, pupils and parents in relation to devices and platforms used by the school.*
- 4.11. *Encourages the council's education department to continue to provide CPD for teachers in relation to developing and upskilling relevant digital skills.*
- 4.12. *Encourages schools to appoint link-governors for digital inclusion and support for*

parents.


- 4.13. *Recommends that the council's education department works with schools, libraries, community centres and Youth First to audit and explore opportunities for in-person digital support hubs for pupils. Particular consideration should be given to those areas likely to be the most digitally excluded.*
- 4.14. *Recommends that young people are asked for their feedback on any in-person support like that mentioned in the previous recommendation (including the development of the new Catford Library, for example) at an early stage and throughout.*
- 4.15. *Recommends that the council explores the feasibility of working with the Young Mayor Team to establish a network of digital champions to continue to consider issues relating to digital inclusion in education.*
- 4.16. *Recommends that the council's education department's briefing session for headteachers discusses and comments on the recommendations of this task & finish group when it meets in the summer.*

DRAFT

5. Key findings

Key issue 1: Devices, connectivity and skills

- 5.1. Throughout the review the TFG heard from local stakeholders about the crucial importance of pupils having access to a suitable device with sufficient internet access, and the barriers that many pupils continue to face in these areas.
- 5.2. According to a recent Department for Education (DfE) survey, a lack of technology in pupil's homes is a big barrier for around 60% of pupils nationally. Similarly, Carnegie UK Trust estimate that 62% of children between 5-15 do not have access to their own computer.³

 Key Component 1: DEVICE			
Device – no home access at all	Device – does not have own laptop	Device – does not have own tablet	Device – no use of technical tools or controls for safety
8%	62%	39%	17%
The proportion of children aged 5 – 15 who do not have home access to a desktop computer, laptop or netbook which is connected to the internet. ³⁵	The proportion of children aged 5 – 15 who do not have home access to their own desktop computer, laptop or netbook which is connected to the internet – and is not shared with other family members. ³⁶	The proportion of children aged 5 – 15 who do not have home access to their own tablet. ³⁷	The proportion of parents who report that they do not have any technical tools or controls to manage their child's access to online content. ³⁸

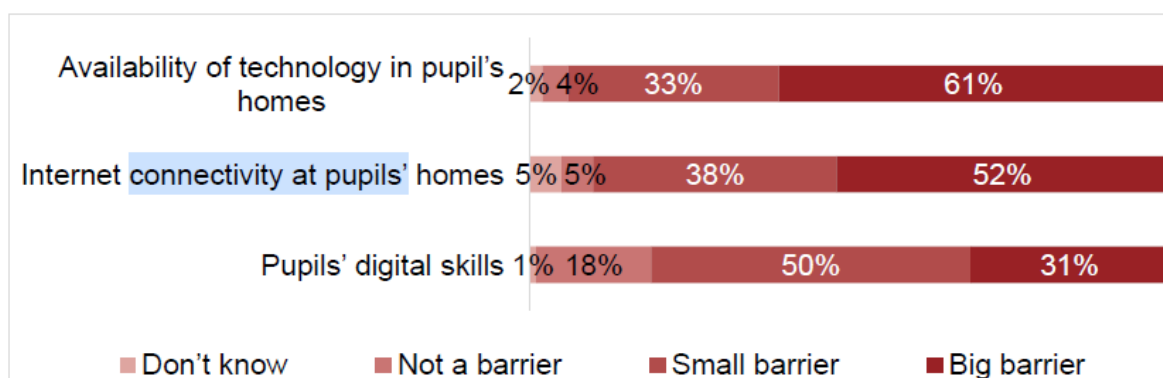
- 5.3. Lewisham Learning informed the TFG that during the pandemic the DfE provided 5,000 devices in Lewisham, but that this still fell short of the need and schools in Lewisham had to buy devices for another 5,000 pupils themselves. Some schools crowdfunded thousands of pounds for additional devices and some worked with a local IT support business to get unused office devices donated and refurbished. In terms of devices, Lewisham Learning also encouraged schools to take up offers through the London Grid for Learning (LGfL).
- 5.4. The TFG also heard, however, that there are still significant numbers of pupils in Lewisham without their own computer, many reliant on sharing a device with someone else or restricted to access via a mobile phone. A local secondary school also told the TFG that the main issue that came back when they surveyed parents and children was access to devices (as well as issues with several family members sharing the same internet connection).
- 5.5. Lack of access to a suitable device was also a challenge identified by the Mayor's *Actively Anti-Racist Advisory Commission* when it engaged with pupils on the topic of digital exclusion. The TFG also heard further detail through engagement with Youth First who also noticed that many of their young people had had to share a device to engage in the online activities that they put on during the pandemic.
- 5.6. The crucial importance of pupils having access to a suitable device that they can use at home was a point strongly emphasised during engagement with a group of local school governors. And given the recent widescale provision of devices to pupils during the pandemic, Lewisham Learning highlighted the sustainability of these devices as an additional high-priority issue, as laptops and software licences over time require replacement and maintenance. The TFG also heard that some families

³ Carnegie UK Trust and UNICEF UK, [Closing the digital divide for good](#), 2021

are reluctant to take devices on loan in case they were liable for repairs or replacement in the case of loss.

- 5.7. In terms of internet access, according to the DfE survey mentioned above, a lack of internet connectivity in pupils' homes is a big barrier for 52% of pupils nationally.⁴

Figure 37: Pupil barriers to increased uptake of EdTech – teachers



Source: Teacher surveys. Base: all respondents, teachers 854.

- 5.8. The TFG heard that the DfE provided around 500 routers in Lewisham during the pandemic. This was in addition to the support with internet access that many schools provided themselves. The TFG also heard, however, that there are still families in the borough that rely on mobile data (including some out of preference) and families with no connectivity at all, whose children have to access free public wi-fi to complete their school work.
- 5.9. Similarly, in the TFG's engagement with schools, a number of schools leaders in the borough noted that access to sufficient connectivity was an issue that was never fully tackled during the pandemic. One school had found that while some parents and carers would say that their children had access to devices and connectivity, in reality it was often very limited access, such as temporary use of a mobile phone.
- 5.10. Lack of sufficient connectivity was also an issue reported by youth services and council officers (such as those responsible for providing online work experience during the pandemic). It was also highlighted by the Mayor's Actively Anti-Racist Advisory Commission, with young people themselves stressing the negative impact that lack of access to internet access at home can have on their school life and education.
- 5.11. Following its engagement with around 15 local schools, Lewisham Learning told the TFG that connectivity is the single highest priority issue, especially for the most disadvantaged and those in temporary accommodation.
- 5.12. In engagement with school governors, the TFG again heard that it is often pupils living in temporary accommodation who are most likely to have connectivity issues such as reliance on mobile data. It was noted that free sim card offers rarely include enough data for a child to do their homework all week and one governor suggested that providing Wi-Fi in council managed temporary accommodation and hostel accommodation would go some way to address this issue.
- 5.13. Even with a suitable device and sufficient connectivity, an additional issue that the TFG heard about from some stakeholders was a lack of digital skills and digital

⁴ DfE, [Education technology \(EdTech\) survey](#), June 2021 r

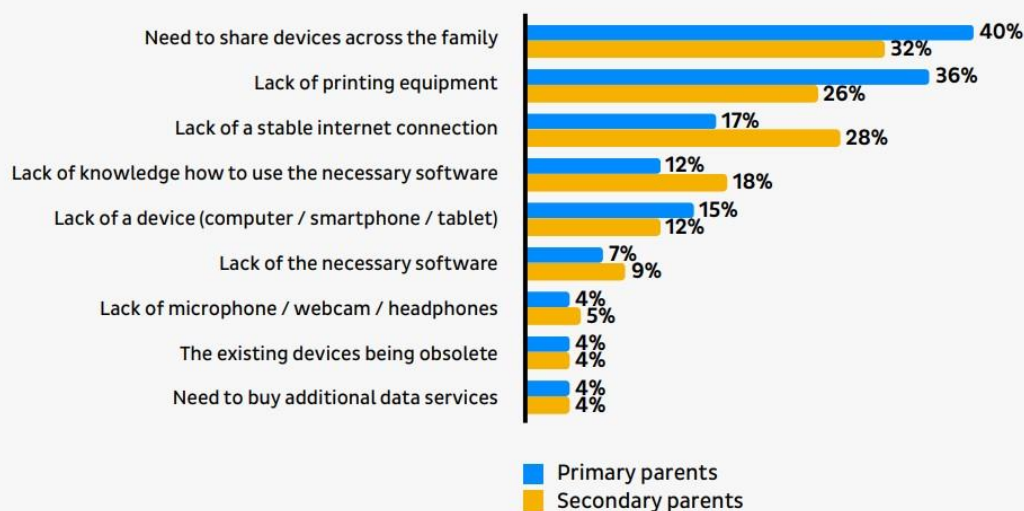
literacy among some young people.

- 5.14. In engagement with Youth First , for example, it was noted that there is a digital skills gap – with young people often able to use social media, but not necessarily having the skills to carry out independent research or prepare and present documents. In the engagement with the Mayor’s Actively Anti-Racist Advisory Commission pupils themselves suggested that the council should provide initiatives for children on using the right study methods.
- 5.15. Youth First also informed the TFG that the Deptford Challenge Trust had recently granted short-term funding for Youth First to carry out a Covid recovery project. This will provide study skills sessions alongside mental health support for young people in Deptford and will be evaluated in due course. Youth First stressed that any study/homework initiatives need to be mixed with other activities to appeal to a broad range of young people (rather than just the most motivated).

Key issue 2: Support for parents

- 5.16. Another of the most significant issues the TFG heard about from key local stakeholders was the importance of support for parents with using the digital tools that young people need.
- 5.17. This was noted to be particularly important in relation to children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), those living in temporary accommodation (TA), and those with English as an additional language (EAL).
- 5.18. It was also considered to be important in relation to any pupils that may need to do an increasing amount of work online at home as part of the recovery from the pandemic. This is potentially particularly relevant in relation to those children whose vocabulary and language skills have been affected during the pandemic.
- 5.19. After connectivity, the second highest priority issue identified by Lewisham Learning was providing additional support for parents to help their children, especially those with EAL and SEND. In a recent YouGov survey it was found that 59% of parents of a pupil with SEND said that their child has been disengaged with remote learning. This was 39% for parents of children without additional needs.
- 5.20. The TFG heard that, in Lewisham, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) in schools will think about access and look at reasonable adjustments around home learning. The council also works with SENCOs to share good practice, including information about certain platforms.
- 5.21. Lewisham Learning noted research which found that parents were sometimes unable to aid their children with technology due to their own language skills. Lewisham Learning also noted that most schools are struggling to provide sufficient additional support to EAL pupils and parents, and that it is an aspect that school leaders want to address in a more strategic way. It was noted that the DfE did not provide any specific guidance for EAL parents on “learning at home during COVID-19”.
- 5.22. Lewisham Learning noted that if children and young people are going to be digitally included they need adults in their families and /or communities to be skilled and confident enough to help them acquire skills and knowledge but also understand how to keep them safe. They cited research showing that some of the biggest issues for all parents included needing to share devices, lack of printing equipment, lack of stable connection and lack of skills with the necessary software:

FIGURE 5.1.6: PARENT RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION “WHAT HAVE THE MAIN CHALLENGES BEEN IN USING TECHNOLOGY FOR LEARNING?”



- 5.23. The TFG also heard in engagement with school governors that a lack of IT support for parents in schools is meaning that some parents are waiting days to solve some straightforward problems. One governor suggested that there should be effective mapping of the digital support available so that parents can be informed – particularly in relation to support available in different languages. It was also suggested that the council could broker relationships with specialist support agencies (e.g. interpretation or technical support) on a scale that an individual school can't. It was suggested that an at-scale technical support helpline for teachers, pupils and parents would be helpful if feasible. In engagement with council officers it was suggested that including information about using digital platforms should be included as part of the induction process for new parents.
- 5.24. In response to questions in discussions, the schools governors engaged also expressed support for the idea of link-governors for digital inclusion in order to help address some of these issues.
- 5.25. Parents struggling with technology and software was also an issue that came up in discussions with the EdTech consultant that provided support to Bonus Pastor early in the pandemic, who noted that training for parents was one of the most important areas for action. He noted that at one school he had helped create an online check-in form for children to make sure they were engaged in their work. He also noted that another school he had worked with had created a website for parents of children with special educational needs, which included techniques for working with children at home, access to recordings and other guidance such as a range of possible platforms. The school also created a working party to look at the software.
- 5.26. In its engagement with parents, the Mayor's Actively Anti-Racist Advisory Commission heard further evidence about the practical issues that parents faced, such as a lack of access to laptops, broadband, and configuring devices like printers and scanners. The Commission noted that some local schools had scheduled special meetings for parents to help them with using devices.
- 5.27. In the TFG's own engagement with schools, one school told the TFG about how they had handled thousands of calls from parents during the pandemic to help with IT issues such as log-ins and passwords. Some schools reported that they had created well-received parental handbooks on remote learning. One school suggested offering workshops in libraries and community centres to help parents with IT.

- 5.28. And in engagement with school governors it was suggested that there should be a hardware standard for parents to refer to, with recommendations about what's necessary.
- 5.29. Lewisham Learning noted that as well as needing technological support, many parents also need support with practical and financial support with internet access, safeguarding and early help with behaviour and mental health issues. It was also noted that local schools do a lot work with families who might be reluctant to ask for help through their monitoring and tracking systems and pastoral care teams.
- 5.30. The TFG heard from some stakeholders about the potential benefits of having a better understanding of the specific barriers to digital inclusion families are facing.
- 5.31. It was noted by Lewisham Learning that there is no formal definition of digital inclusion. They referred to the Carnegie Trust's suggested definition, noting the particular importance of the last two:
1. **A device:** *one computer, laptop or tablet per child or young person in education with licensed word processing software and appropriate safeguarding software with any additional equipment required to meet accessibility needs.*
 2. **A strong connection:** *a connection to the internet through home broadband, a wireless router or other connector with a minimum download speed of 10 Mbit/s and an upload speed of 1 Mbit/s.*
 3. **Skills and support:** *the skills and support to effectively participate online as active, critical, and engaged digital citizens. This means the skills to contribute through video call; upload, create, and consume age-appropriate material online; communicate with friends and family online; and explore online leisure opportunities safely and securely.*
 4. **A safe online environment:** *an online environment that is safe for children and young people, free from bullying or abuse, fraud, or misinformation.*
 5. **Sustainability of access:** *digital devices and connections that work reliably and are maintained and upgraded as technology progresses.*
- 5.32. In the TFG's own engagement with the Carnegie Trust it was noted that Carnegie has been working on digital inclusion for nearly a decade, with a specific focus on children and young people for the last five years. In discussions it was noted that the lack of a single definition or understanding of the concept of digital inclusion has made it more challenging to have a coherent and ongoing policy discussion about addressing it.
- 5.33. While schools didn't appear to have any set definitions of digital inclusion, one local secondary school noted that any definition should include: having the necessary equipment and connectivity; having the necessary skills and knowledge to get online; and having access to the necessary online (paid-for) platform. The importance of pupils having the same devices was also stressed.
- 5.34. The EdTech consultant that worked with Bonus Pastor explained that at another school he'd also carried out an audit to understand what access pupils had at home, and suggested that an audit like this would be needed for each year group in order to better identify issues such as the reliance on mobile phones and mobile data for accessing learning.
- 5.35. Lewisham Learning noted that as well as recommending a national measure for digital inclusion, the Carnegie Trust also recommended a local authority digital inclusion tracker to identify children and young people at a local level. On this, Lewisham Learning suggested there may an opportunity for some joint work with other local authorities, not just for local, but for national benefit too.

Key issue 3: The importance of space to study

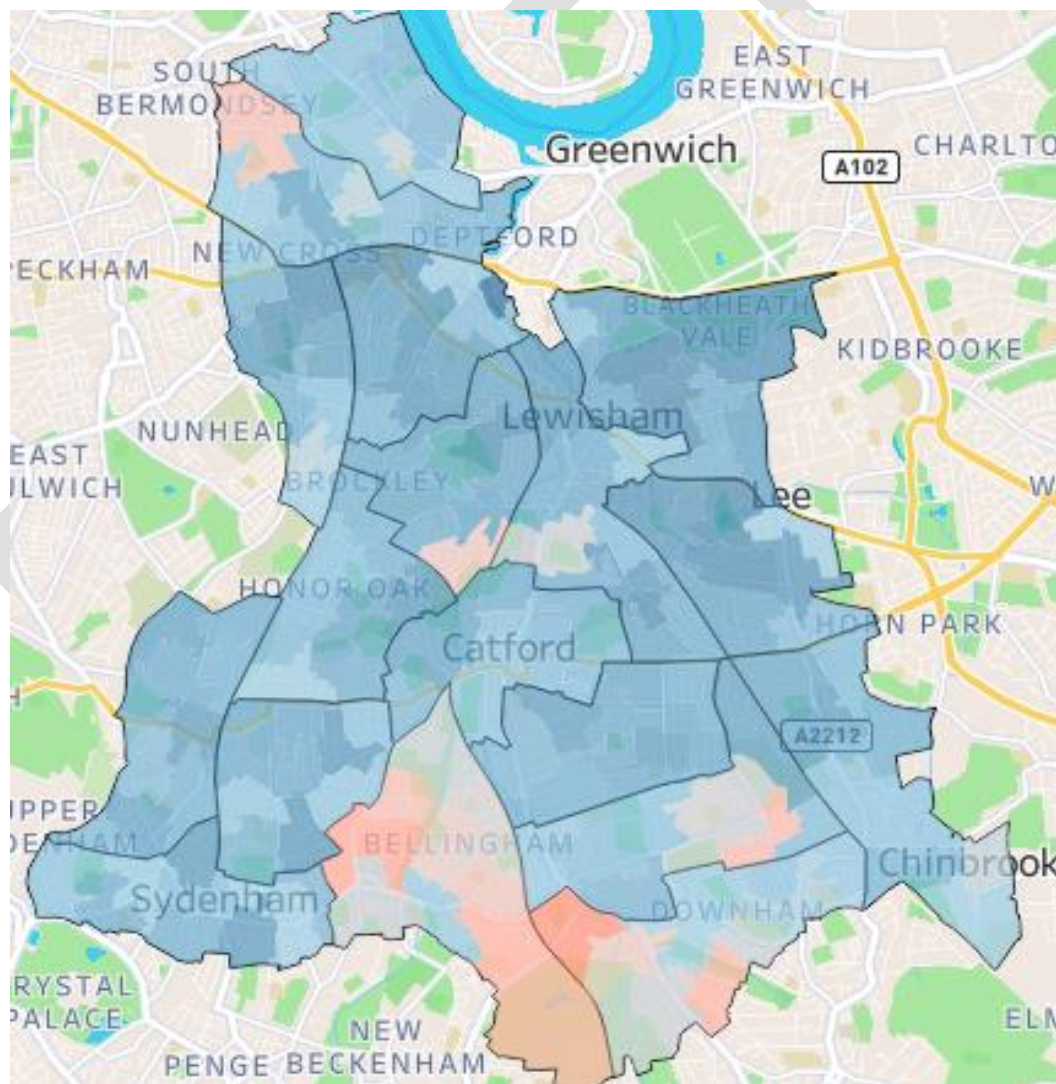
- 5.36. Another issue the TFG heard from local stakeholders was many pupils not having sufficient space at home to study, which was made more evident during the pandemic. Lack of space was considered by some to be as important as a lack of access to devices and connectivity.
- 5.37. Early on in the review the school heard from a secondary school in the borough that children not having a suitable place at home to work had been a significant issue during the pandemic, and one that it hasn't been possible to resolve. The school also noted that many of its Young Mayor candidates had mentioned after-school facilities for young people in their statements, which hasn't always been the case – and which may have been one of the impacts of lockdown on young people. The school noted that its library is open every day until 6pm, which is appreciated by pupils, and that it might also be possible to extend the school library opening hours to Saturdays, but that it would be difficult to staff.
- 5.38. Another secondary school engaged with noted that they also provided space after school for pupils to do their homework, but that it could also be a challenge staffing these sessions. The schools noted that lack of space and overcrowding are potential issues and that there are very few places in the community for pupils at this school to go to study.
- 5.39. Lack of adequate space to study was also an issue that Youth First saw among a number of young people during the pandemic. As noted in the previous section, the Deptford Challenge Trust has granted short-term funding for Youth First to carry out a Covid recovery project involving the provision of study skills sessions alongside mental health support for young people in Deptford.
- 5.40. The TFG also heard from a number of stakeholders how those living in temporary accommodation are among some of those most affected by a lack of space to study. In their briefing to the TFG, Lewisham Learning noted that it can provide further barriers in relation to where children can work, how they access technology and internet. They also noted that in June 2019 Lewisham had 2,195 households and 4,464 children in temporary accommodation. The latest available data (March 2021) shows that there are 2,486 households and 5,057 children in temporary accommodation.⁵
- 5.41. Lewisham Learning said that local school leaders see supporting pupils in temporary accommodation as a big issue they can't solve on their own. Through checks and good pastoral care schools do what they can to help overcome barriers to learning for pupils, but schools said that they would benefit from more liaison with other council departments.
- 5.42. Similarly, during discussions on homelessness at a meeting of the Housing Select Committee, TFG members heard about the importance of the housing department, CYP directorate, and schools sharing information to put in place plans to preserve education, particularly for those with special education and other needs. It was noted that over the last 18 months a partnership has been built up between housing officers and the admissions and attendance team in order to share information as early as possible.⁶
- 5.43. Schools engaged with during the TFG noted that children living in temporary accommodation had been able to use the school to have space to study during the

⁵ MHCLG, [Live tables on homelessness](#), January to March 2021

⁶ Lewisham Housing Select Committee, 9 Dec 21, [item 5](#)

pandemic. One of the primary schools engaged with suggested that it would be helpful to have a space with free Wi-Fi where children in temporary accommodation can access grants to access devices and connectivity. In engagement with the school governor of another local primary school it was noted that around 40% of their pupils are in temporary accommodation.

- 5.44. One of the secondary school the TFG engaged with early on in the review suggested coordinating hubs for pupils with full ICT provision in evenings, weekends and holidays, which would be based in schools using a blend of school and external staff and advertised to pupils via social media and school emails, google classrooms. It was also suggested there should be access to other services in these hubs, such as on-site counsellors, outreach workers and careers advisors.
- 5.45. One of the additional pieces of evidence considered by the TFG was the Digital Inclusion Risk Index (image below – red indicates greater risk of digital exclusion). This is a mapping tool created by Greater Manchester Combined Authority to show where digital exclusion is most likely to occur, based on 12 indicators on demography, deprivation and broadband. Information like this could be helpful in identifying priority areas in Lewisham.



Low risk High risk

- 5.46. In engagement with pupils and parents, the Mayor’s Actively Anti-Racist Advisory Commission, heard suggestions that libraries should be used, with dedicated times for young people to access as this would encourage attendance and provide opportunities to teach digital skills outside of the classroom. Pupils also noted, however, that the opening times of libraries were not always suitable and that there should be other programmes for students who may not have access to libraries at all.
- 5.47. The TFG also noted comments from the Commission’s engagement with pupils that any proposal to provide extra help for young people should be led by young people themselves.

6. Task & Finish Group methodology

- 6.1. The TFG was run as a project utilising an *agile* methodology in order to be:

Collaborative – scrutiny officers, directorate officers and councillors working together to address a topical issue of concern, using a shared space on MS Teams

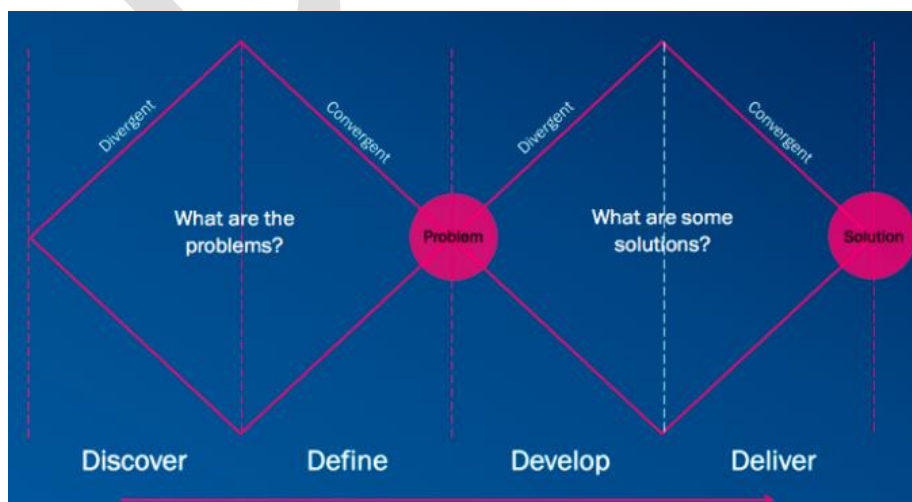
Time limited – suggesting solutions in a timely manner, with allocated tasks, progress checks and deadlines

Flexible – with a mixture of formal and informal meetings, visits, research, user engagement

Focussed on residents – making service user experience key, the issue will be clearly defined, and solutions suggested, on the basis of understanding residents’ experience

Focussed on solutions – taking evidence from a wide range of sources and good practice to develop affordable, practical solutions that are evidence based and implementable and that will have a positive impact on the lives of residents.

- 6.2. A ‘double diamond’ approach was taken which split the project into two parts (diamonds). The first part was the ‘discovery’ stage. The issue (the topic of the TFG) was the starting point and then research and evidence collection was carried out to really understand the issue and define it more clearly. Once the issue was well understood and well defined, the second stage began. Further research and evidence collection was carried out, seeking inspiration from elsewhere and working with a range of different stakeholders and experts to investigate potential solutions. Then a clear set of recommendations could be produced.



7. Nature of expected outcomes

- 7.1. The work of the TFG is intended to support work to improve the following outcomes:
- *More of the pupils most in need in Lewisham are able to access and use the digital tools that are necessary for their education.*
 - *An increased understanding and awareness among schools and local stakeholders of local and national best practice in relation to digital inclusion in education.*
 - *The identification of ways of monitoring levels of digital inclusion among pupils in Lewisham, particularly those that have been identified as under-achieving.*

8. Stakeholder engagement

- 8.1. Stakeholder engagement began with Lewisham Learning, who provided a detailed presentation and briefing on digital exclusion in education, in response to many of the questions raised during the TFG's first meeting. This provided the TFG with a detailed sense of the current situation locally and nationally, as well as some of the potential opportunities.
- 8.2. The TFG also engaged early on with a number of key council officers and school leaders from across the borough, which provided the TFG with valuable insight into the range of challenges and successes during the pandemic.
- 8.3. The TFG also engaged with the national organisations, the Carnegie UK Trust and Socitm Advisory, regarding their recent work on digital inclusion. This provided the TFG with information on the latest developments in digital inclusion in general across local government, and the latest research specifically relating to children and young people.
- 8.4. Other key engagement sessions for the TFG were with Youth First to hear about their experience during the pandemic and current plans, and with Glasgow City Council to hear about the teaching and learning elements of their digital strategy.
- 8.5. The TFG engaged with further schools and a group of school governors in the later stages of the review, once the TFG has gathered a lot of evidence. The TFG also took into account the evidence on digital inclusion gathered by the Mayors' *Actively Anti-Racist Advisory Commission* in its recent engagement with pupils and parents.
- 8.6. A full list of meetings and engagements sessions are listed as background reports at the end of this report.

9. Monitoring and ongoing scrutiny

- 9.1. A copy of this report and the recommendations will be circulated by email to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note, and the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny may suggest that the report is presented to full Council to allow for wider debate, in addition to it being considered by the Mayor and Cabinet for an executive response.
- 9.2. The task and finish group will be disbanded once it has made its final report. Its final set of minutes will go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for agreement.
- 9.3. The Mayoral response to the report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The relevant task and finish group Members will be invited to lead the discussion on the response. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may request an update on the implementation of agreed recommendations in six or 12 months' time

to itself or an appropriate select committee.

10. Report author and contact

10.1. If you have any questions about this report please contact:

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Background Papers – available on request from the report authors

Background Paper	Description
A	Final report to Mayor & Cabinet
B	Task & Finish Group Proforma
C	Scoping paper
D	Lewisham Learning presentation
E	Lewisham Learning briefing
F	Notes from September meetings with school leaders (St Matthew Academy, Bonus Pastor, Forest Hill)
G	Notes from meeting with Carnegie UK
H	Presentation from meeting with Socitm
I	Notes from meeting with Youth First
J	Notes from Mayor's advisory commission
K	Notes from October meetings with school leaders (Sedgehill, Elfrida)
L	Notes from meeting with Glasgow City Council
M	Presentation for the mid-stage review on the summary of evidence and key themes.
N	Notes from meeting with EdTech Consultant, Lawrence Tijjani
O	Notes from meeting with school governors
P	Notes from meeting with key council officers in relation to learning disability.
Q	Minutes of Housing Select Committee, 9 th Dec 2021