



Bridging the digital divide

In these extraordinary times, the LeithChooses Steering Group has been thinking about the 'digital divide' that separates those who can from those who can't benefit from modern technology.

Many people in Leith are unable to access the internet and so cannot benefit from online resources due to a lack of money to buy their own computer/laptop/tablet/smartphone, or pay for internet connections. Or they are cut off by a lack of knowledge and skills, or a lack of training and support. With the schools, libraries and other public resources closed, currently, and no staff to assist, they are doubly excluded.

Being on the wrong side of the 'digital divide' is both a result of inequality and a cause of additional inequality.

Children in this situation lose out educationally at the best of times, and especially currently while the schools are closed, with teaching and learning moving online. Even when the schools reopen in August, it is likely that a proportion of education will continue online.

Many charities and community groups in Leith are acutely aware of this and many are trying to help, in various ways.

But before buying technology for someone, it's important to check (1) whether they could benefit from funding through one of the government or local authority schemes, and (2) that the right technology is being bought.

At LeithChooses we have put this short paper together with some basic guidelines, to help to ensure that charities and community groups do not waste valuable resources and can, hopefully, deliver the most useful support to their service users.

If you feel it could be useful, please pass the paper below on to any of your colleagues, staff and service users, as you feel appropriate. The paper includes information on:

- Help with funding & Funding for education
- What technology to get?
- Access to the internet
- Tablets – iPads – Cheap tablets
- Laptops
- Smartphones

Please note that the information and advice contained in the paper is offered in good faith, but may not be appropriate in all circumstances. It is wise to also ask for advice from others who may be familiar with the buyer's needs, and to ask your supplier to confirm that the item is suitable for the particular circumstances of the purchaser. It is also wise to make sure you get a receipt from the supplier, and ideally a warranty for the equipment. LeithChooses cannot be held liable for any consequences of equipment purchase.