

Overview and Scrutiny



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



February 2022



Membership of the Task and Finish Group



Councillor Colin Elliott (Chair)



Councillor Obajimi Adefiranye



Councillor Liz Johnston-Franklin



Councillor Caroline Kalu



Councillor Paul Maslin

Supporting officers:

John Bardens (Scrutiny Manager)

Timothy Andrew (Scrutiny Manager)

Cheryl Thorley (Business Support and Administration Apprentice)

1. Chair's Introduction

- 1.1. When deciding on why I wanted to have a particular piece of work focused on education, specifically, online, digital provision to pupils across Lewisham. I realised that for it to be worthwhile, we would need to have an open and honest appraisal of all the evidence, as well as acknowledge what we have done well and where improvements need to be implemented.
- 1.2. To this end, I believe the Digital Inclusion in Education Task and Finish Group have been successful. The support and engagement from all those involved, including organisations and sectors outside of the boroughs was very useful and encouraging.
- 1.3. Moreover, the openness, and honest responses to our questions during many of our meetings, also was a credit to all, and showed us just how resilient our schools across the borough were, and continue to be, having had to adapt quickly to some of the most challenging times in recent history, due to the COVID pandemic. Without such honesty, this final report as presented, would not have been possible.
- 1.4. Whilst, exploring much of the existing evidence and research findings, it became clear that a key component crucial to us making practical recommendations, would be the need to establish a clear definition, as to what actually constitutes digital Inclusion and Exclusion, if we were to clearly identify any problems going forward and add value to existing practices.
- 1.5. In the absence of us finding a universally agreed definition, based on the evidence gathered, I have drafted a description that I felt guided our task and would recommend this basic definition for any future work in this area. The definition states that:

'Digital inclusion, in the context of education, and for the purposes of the Digital Inclusion in Education Task and Finish Group, refers to the ability of any Lewisham pupil, regardless of school attended, social or economic background, to have the ability and necessary equipment to remotely access, participate in, and fully engage with all lessons and teaching materials provided by their school on-line.

This is to include all digital learning content transmitted via Wi-Fi over the internet by the school on a broad range of platforms as deemed feasible, and in accord with a pupils year group, subject requirements, and expected learning outcomes, including those with a Special Educational Need or Disability.

The absence, or lack of access to any of the aforementioned conditions by a pupil would constitute them by necessity digitally excluded.'
- 1.6. In conclusion, I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to all group members, council officers and school heads, as well as those organisations from within and outside of the Borough, who supported us in this first Task and Finish exercise.
- 1.7. I am confident that if all the recommendations as agreed and outlined in this report are implemented, the outcome can only be of benefit for all present, and future generations of pupils in Lewisham.

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 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

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

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 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*

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

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.*

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

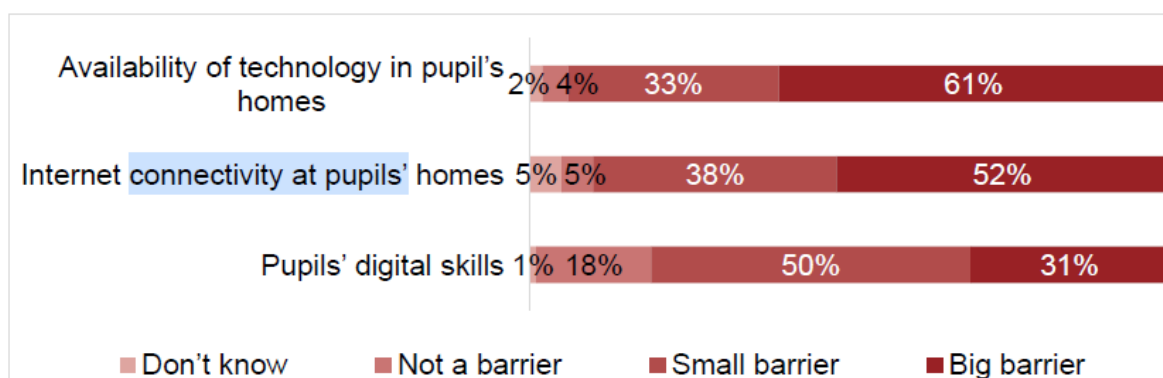
- 5.3. Lewisham Learning informed the TFG that during the pandemic the DfE provided 5,000 devices in Lewisham, but that this still fell short of the need and schools in Lewisham had to buy devices for another 5,000 pupils themselves. Some schools crowdfunded thousands of pounds for additional devices 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

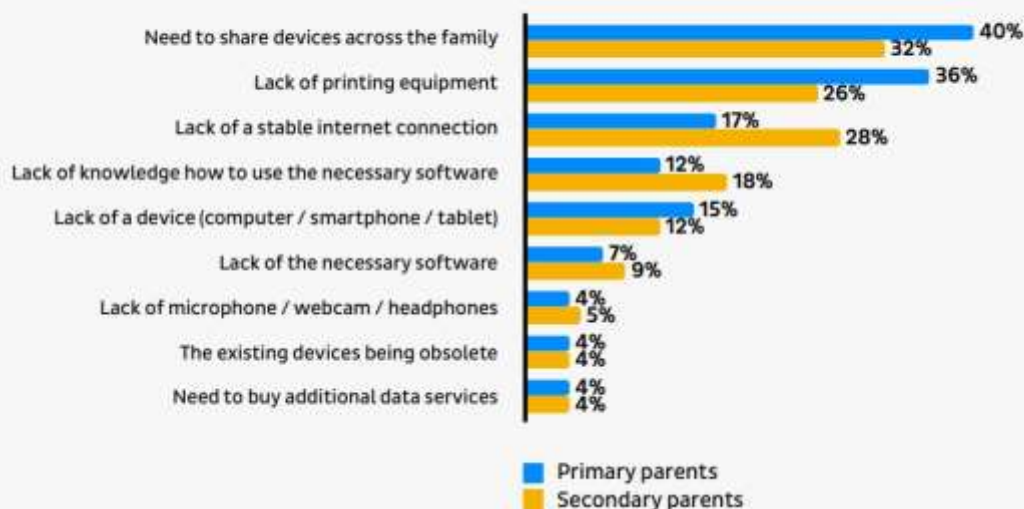
literacy among some young people.

- 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

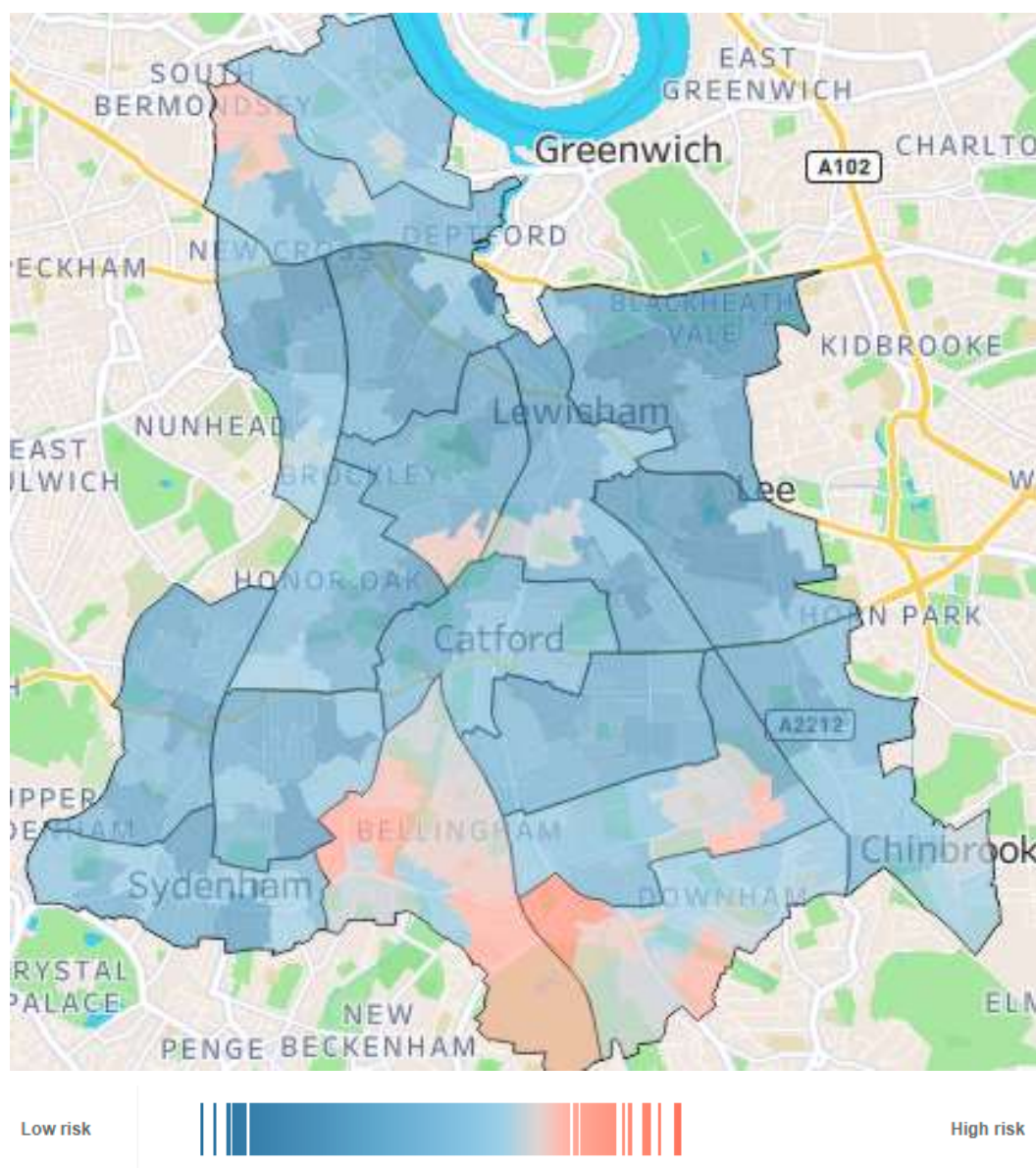
- 5.36. Another issue the TFG heard from local stakeholders was many pupils not having sufficient space at home to study, which was made more evident during the pandemic. Lack of space was considered by some to be as important as a lack of access to devices and connectivity.
- 5.37. Early on in the review 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 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

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

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

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.



- 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

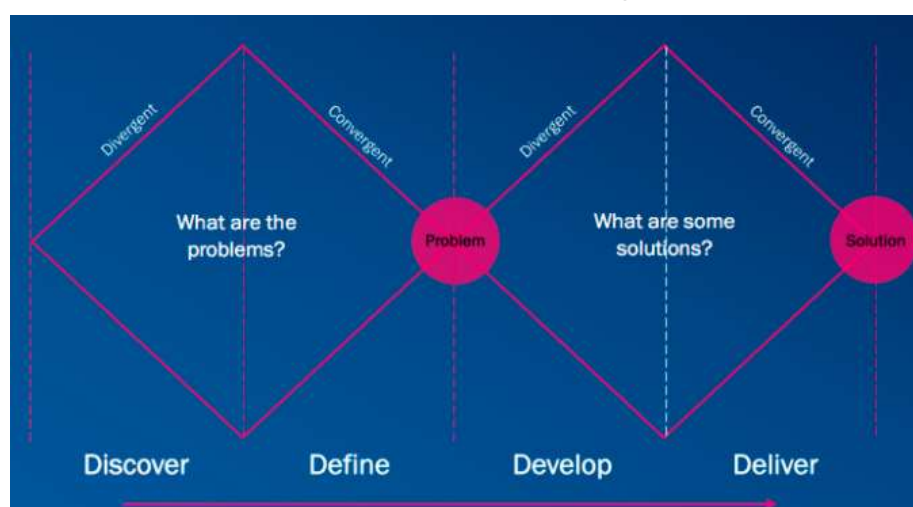
Time limited – suggesting solutions in a timely manner, with allocated tasks, progress checks and deadlines

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:

John.Bardens@lewisham.gov.uk (02083149976)

Timothy.Andrew@lewisham.gov.uk (02083147916)

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