Digital Lifelines Scotland Small Grants Fund Jan 2023 - Dec 2023

Impact Report
February 2024

The Digital Lifelines Scotland Programme

Digital Lifelines Scotland launched in April 2021 funded by Scottish Government and run as a partnership programme instigated, designed and delivered across a wide range of organisations.

Digital Lifelines Scotland seeks to improve digital inclusion and to design digital solutions that better meet people's needs, to improve their health outcomes so that:

PEOPLE have greater access to the confidence, skills, and motivation alongside devices and connectivity that form digital solutions that keep them safe and that enable them to become and remain connected to family, friends and relevant services that support them.

THE SERVICES that support these people have the digital means to develop and strengthen the support they provide, and staff that are skillful in using and developing digital solutions to enable those they support.

THE SECTOR is connected and collaborating, developing joined-up services and exploring digital solutions together.
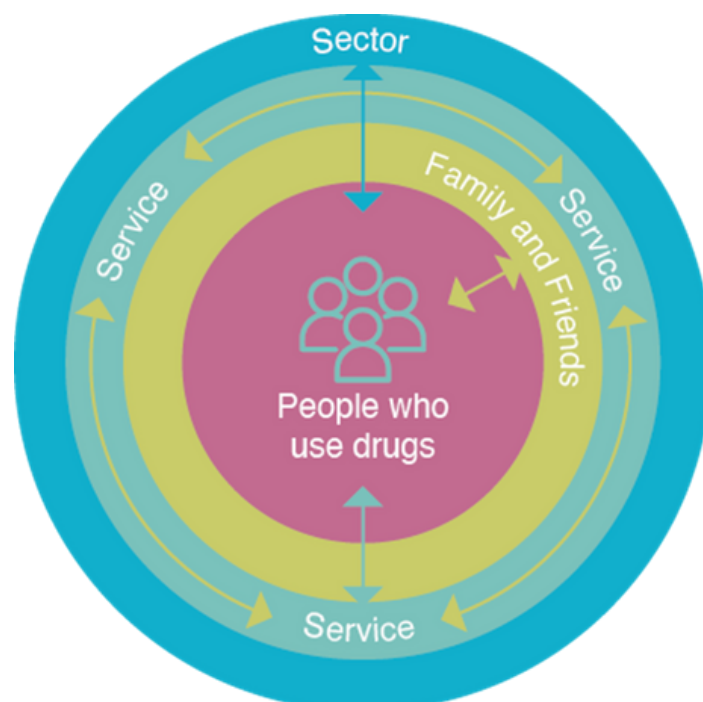
Small Grants 2023 Fund

The main objective of the fund was to support small, local organisations with income of less than £250,000 per annum to continue or extend digital inclusion activities with people at risk of death from a drug overdose and those who care about them and support them.

The primary focus of the organisation did not have to be drug death prevention but the activity applied for had to be working with people who are at risk of death from a drug overdose and are or have recently been:

- Experiencing homelessness
- Transitioning from custody
- Recently discharged from hospital

Grants up to £10,000 were available to support existing digital inclusion work over a 12 month period from January 2023 - December 2023.
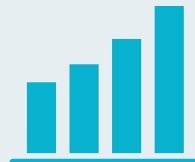
**Maximum
Award Amount**

£10,000

Funded Projects

Eight projects were supported through the fund, totalling £76,949.

Funded projects

8

Total amount awarded

£76,949

Average amount awarded

£9,618

Project Delivery

The 8 funded projects are delivering across 10 local authority areas in Scotland.

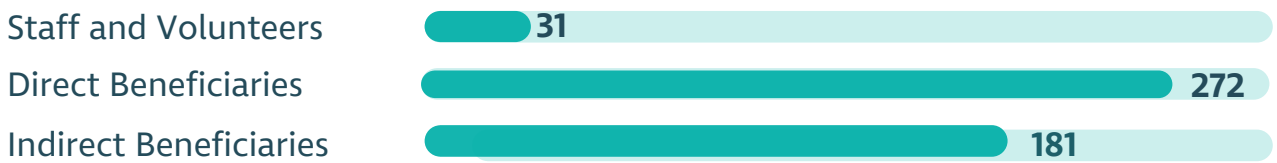Find out about each funded project in our interactive Google map here

Beneficiaries Supported

This fund was targeted at people at risk of drug related harm across three thematic areas.

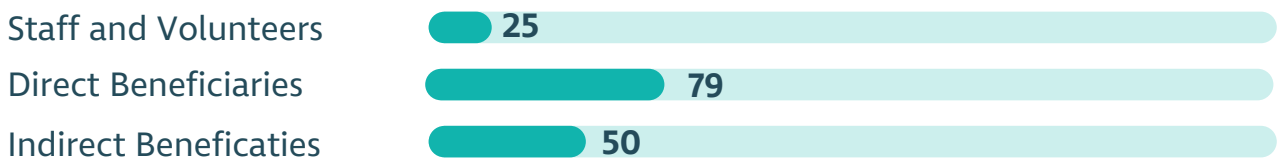The number of people supported in each thematic area are shown below.

Experiencing Homelessness

Staff and Volunteers — 31
Direct Beneficiaries — 272
Indirect Beneficiaries — 181

Transitioning from Custody

Staff and Volunteers — 17
Direct Beneficiaries — 293
Indirect Beneficaties — 201

Recently discharged from hospital

Staff and Volunteers — 25
Direct Beneficiaries — 79
Indirect Beneficaties — 50

73

Staff and Volunteers have
been supported
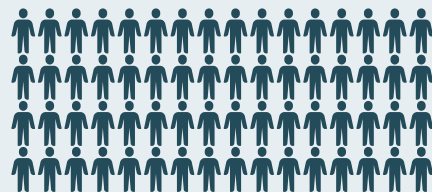
644

Direct beneficiaries have
been supported

Devices Distributed

People Experiencing Homelessness

129	23	11	31	362
Phones	Laptops	Tablets	Other Devices	Connectivity

People Transitioning from Prison

87	11	0	3	536
Phones	Laptops	Tablets	Other Devices	Connectivity

People Being Released from Hospital

49	5	9	6	59
Phones	Laptops	Tablets	Other Devices	Connectivity

Funded Projects

Organisation Name	Project Summary	Amount Awarded
East Ayrshire Churches Homelessness Action	The project supports people in urban and rural areas affected by substance use through drop in and recovery hub services.	£9,500
Input	The project provides refurbished digital devices and digital support to tackle digital exclusion with people facing social disadvantage, people being released from custody or hospital and people affected by addiction.	£10,000
Irvine Sports Club	The project provides devices and digital inclusion activities for families affected by substance use in North Ayrshire.	£10,000
Recovery Ayr	The project tackles digital poverty through providing devices and basic digital skills training and support within the recovery community in South Ayrshire.	£8,000
Red Chair Highland Ltd	The project provides devices, connectivity, and digital support to people in crisis affected by substance use in Highland	£9,949

Organisation Name	Project Summary	Amount Awarded
Restoration Fife Ltd	The project provides digital devices and group and one to one support via multiple recovery cafes across Fife.	£9,500
The Duke of Edinburgh's Award - Perth and Kinross Association	The project will develop a digital community hub for young people at risk of drug harm in Perth and Kinross.	£10,000
Zone Out Partnership	The project provides a peer education programme to develop the digital skills knowledge and confidence of people facing social and economic disadvantage including homelessness, mental ill health, and substance misuse.	£10,000
*project summary based on original application information **Total amount awarded in 2023**		**£76,949**

Project Insights

Organisations reported on their successes, learning and challenges through grant monitoring reports and monitoring calls with the Digital Lifelines Programme Team.   Below summarises some of the key insights shared by funded projects.

Offering a set-up service to ensure that devices were received in good working order worked well. This ensured people where able to immediately reap the benefits of being connected with support, services, family and friends.

Having a supply of devices available and reserved for targeted groups of people through this funding, allowed organisations to respond quickly to urgent referrals. These requests were mainly for smart phones to help connect people to supports, services and their families at point of crisis.

Organisations found attending the Community of Learning sessions was useful during the delivery of their projects. They felt they provided an opportunity to access additional learning resources and hear about the success and challenges of other organisations and ways they were implementing digital inclusion.

Many organisations advised that they have developed better referral processes and have improved relationships with referral partners. This has helped ensure support gets to people who need it the most in a timely manner.

Having flexibility to purchase phones and provide connectivity quickly allowed organisations to be reactive for the people they support. This was particularly beneficial for people experiencing homelessness or fleeing domestic violence.

The Impact

Restoration Fife

Theme: Reducing Isolation

"Being able to distribute devices and connectivity allowed us to support people with their recovery journey. Having a device allowed people to access recovery focused supports and services online. It reduced isolation by allowing people to connect with the people that matter to them and access services online when in-person access wasn't an option for them."

Irvine Sports Club

Theme: Harm Reduction

"Our project has made a vast difference to the people we have supported. We have worked with people to develop their digital skills, and confidence supporting them to access relevant support when they needed it. People supported have reported improvements to their mental health and wellbeing and we have seen a reduction in the number of drug related overdoses for people accessing our services."

Recovery Ayr

Theme: Inclusion

"The project has helped people to engage with and maintain contact with networks and services which supports their recovery. Overall it has built confidence and reduced isolation."

The Challenges

Several projects received high numbers of referrals from partner organisations that did not meet the target beneficiaries within the funding programme. Organisations spent time communicating this with their partners and identifying other suitable supports and services they could signpost people to.

An organisation reported that a lack of staff capacity, due to increased demand on services, impacted staffs ability to attend Digital Champion training provided by the programme.

Some organisations reported increased demand for devices and digital inclusion support when they began delivering their service. Some found it difficult to establish who was most in need and overcame this by developing referral forms and processes to help prioritise the requests they recieved.

There were some challenges locating people who had been referred to the service due to their lifestyle. An assertive outreach approach was adopted including linking with referring partners to overcome this.

Another organisation advised that the connectivity and devices they supplied didn't always work well for people living in certain geographical areas. Organisations had to find ways to overcome this by supplying different devices and connectivity from other funding sources.

Impact Story

Red Chair Highland
Susan's* Story

Red Chair Highland work in partnership with multiple organisations in Highland to provide digital inclusion support for people affected by homelessness, involved in the criminal justice system and affected by substance use.

"We provided support to Susan via one of our delivery partners Apex Highland. Susan had been using substances and struggled with addiction for most of her life. She had received criminal charges and had spent a significant amount of time in prison over the last decade.

Apex Highland received a request to support Susan at liberation to reduce risk of reoffending. They identified that Susan needed some digital inclusion support to ensure she had a way to stay in touch with key services, and supports upon release to reduce the risk of return to addiction, risky behaviour and reoffending.

We worked with Apex Highland to ensure Susan had access to a smartphone and data when released. We also provided digital training and support to her support worker who helped Susan learn how to use her phone.

The smart phone was imperative as Susan not only kept in touch with her support worker, she also used it to claim Universal Credits, make appointments, contact housing and to connect with family members who she hadn't spoke to in a long time. The smart phone and digital support was an essential part of supporting Susan to move towards a positive destination after leaving prison.

*name changed to maintian confidentiality