

**From:** Owen, Christopher (EPS - Digital Learning Division) [/O=EXCHANGELABS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=08B3E02209844022953F8FD521233329-OWEN, CHRIS]  
**Sent:** 02/02/2021 11:08:05  
**To:** [REDACTED] SAED); [REDACTED]@gov.wales]; Woodward, Tom (OFM - Special Adviser) [tom.woodward@gov.wales]  
**Subject:** RE: devices

Hi [REDACTED]

Absolutely, this is very frustrating especially as we've been so proactive in this space from the outset. Unfortunately the devices and connectivity are the low hanging fruit that are easy targets by the media. It's worth highlighting that the digital baseline exercise highlighted broader cultural issues around remote learning as follows:

882 schools (59 % of the national total) had detailed barriers they faced when delivering remote learning. These barriers can be broken into the following categories:

- **Environmental** - 478 schools (54% of those that replied, 32% of the national total)
- **Social** - 387 schools (44% of those that replied, 26% of the national total)
- **Devices** - 374 schools (42% of those that replied, 25% of the national total)
- **Teaching** - 340 schools (39% of those that replied, 27% of the national total)
- **Infrastructure** - 244 schools (27% of those that replied, 16% of the national total)

From a devices and connectivity perspective, we're absolutely reliant on the schools and local authorities to identify where the gaps are. It's certainly fair to say that some LA's are more proactive than others in this space. The work we've completed:

- Clear definition of a digitally excluded learner - A digitally excluded learner is defined as a learner who does not have access to an appropriate internet connected device to engage in online learning activities from home.
- Statement in the expectations document - We expect schools to support digitally excluded learners in accessing remote learning opportunities by distributing school devices with appropriate end user agreements. If there are problems in issuing devices or connectivity challenges, schools must report this to their local authority EdTech lead
- Clear process for schools to identify families who need support and how they can work with their local authorities to put this support in place
- 133,000 new devices being made available via Hwb EdTech, plus 50,000 additional devices to come in April/May.
- Process for recycling existing devices and funding licences
- Procurement of MiFi
- Working with mobile operators to extend data uplifts / zero rating websites
- Summarising all commercial connectivity offers available for families and providing to LA's
- Working with ESNR Digital Infrastructure colleagues on the challenges around domestic connectivity

Very open to any ideas that can change the narrative on this, just mindful that it would then shift to some of the larger cultural issues mentioned above.

Thanks

Chris

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**From:** [REDACTED] NR (SAED) [REDACTED] NR @gov.wales>

**Sent:** 02 February 2021 10:37

**To:** Owen, Christopher (EPS - Digital Learning Division) <Christopher.Owen2@gov.wales>; Woodward, Tom (OFM - Special Adviser) <Tom.Woodward@gov.wales>

**Subject:** ATB/RE: devices

Hi Chris,

Just to come in on this. The misconceptions out there are really frustrating, must be doubly so for you!

But in building our case, if we were being objective, I don't think the points from the baseline exercise contradict the Commissioner's report? We recognise "number of additionally digitally excluded" and we have some figures for these. They may not be the same as the Commissioner's report, but if we're being honest 11% is quite a high figure for a representative sample (if that's what they're claiming).

I guess the question is – have LAs/schools being supplying information/need to us in a timely manner? What more could we have expected from them?

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**Oddi wrth:** Owen, Christopher (EPS - Digital Learning Division) <[Christopher.Owen2@gov.wales](mailto:Christopher.Owen2@gov.wales)>

**Anfonwyd:** 02 February 2021 10:03

**At:** Woodward, Tom (OFM - Special Adviser) <[Tom.Woodward@gov.wales](mailto:Tom.Woodward@gov.wales)>

**Copi/Cc:** [REDACTED] NR (SAED) <[REDACTED] NR @gov.wales>

**Pwnc:** RE: devices

Hi Tom

I can completely understand the concern.

The Commissioners report was based on 162 responses from schools which represents just 11% of schools in Wales.

The report states:

*In more than half of settings over 90% of learners have access to a digital device, and in a quarter of schools and colleges all learners are reported to have access, but 12% of schools had at least 20% of learners without access.*

As such, this accounts for a small minority of learners across Wales. It is worth noting that the Commissioners report does not provide any detail around the actual number of learners across Wales who do not have a device or connectivity.

By contrast, the digital baseline exercise that we commissioned in December and reported on in January confirmed:

- Phase 1 of our digital baseline survey has now concluded, with **submissions received from all 22 local authorities**. The emerging findings confirm that there is **a small number of additional digitally excluded learners** now identified (since our original engagement at the outset of the pandemic). However, the **vast majority of local authorities** have also confirmed that **support has already been put in place in most cases**.
- In summary, local authorities reported that there are:
  - 5,079 learners/staff members reported without adequate connectivity at home; and
  - 6,831 learners/staff members reported who don't have access to an adequate device.
- Based on the feedback provided by local authorities, officials are confident that there are **sufficient devices available** to meet the demand (through the new EdTech kit, repurposed kit or kit LA's and schools have purchased themselves).
- However, there is **ongoing work** to support families who are **struggling with connectivity issues**. Digital Learning officials are working closely with ESNR digital infrastructure colleagues who are responsible for domestic connectivity. We have also **provided a summary document to local authorities, outlining all the current options available**, which they can use with schools to support their families.
- Following the **DfE announcement for the pilot limited data uplift scheme for schools in England**, the Welsh Government has been engaged with the for main mobile operators to **extend this scheme to families in Wales**. Officials are in **the final stages of agreeing legal terms and conditions** and are hopeful that **arrangements will be in place shortly**.

Please let me know if you require any further information

Thanks

Chris

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**From:** Woodward, Tom (OFM - Special Adviser) <[Tom.Woodward@gov.wales](mailto:Tom.Woodward@gov.wales)>

**Sent:** 02 February 2021 09:47

**To:** Owen, Christopher (EPS - Digital Learning Division) <[Christopher.Owen2@gov.wales](mailto:Christopher.Owen2@gov.wales)>

**Cc:** NR (SAED) NR [@gov.wales](mailto:NR@gov.wales)

**Subject:** devices

Hiya Chris

The Minister remains concerned about the commissioner's findings that more than 4 in 10 schools report pupils not having the devices they need. Do we accept these findings at all? There must be some truth in them? Is there any more we can do?

Sorry, I know you have been asked this lots of times!

Tom

**Tom Woodward**

**Special Adviser / Ymgynghorydd Arbennig**

**Welsh Government / Llywodraeth Cymru**



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