Reboot UK: Digital Skills for the hardest to reach

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	o LR = literature review
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Reboot UK is an innovative inclusion project that aims to rebuild the lives of people in poverty through personalised basic digital skills training and community-based support. One of Reboot UK's key aims is to investigate transformative health and wellbeing benefits of digital technology for people in poverty. The project follows test-and-learn principles, and will investigate potential models of support, before delivering and evaluating them in community environments, to help build effective and evidenced models that can have real impact on both individuals and communities, with the aim of scaling these more widely.

This report is a lit review or Reboot UK's investigatory work, identifying and analysing key interventions for testing. Reboot UK's aim is to develop and evaluate innovative methods of engaging and supporting people who don't engage with the current stock of community-based internet skills. The project targets people with poor mental health, homeless people, and families in poverty, due to their likelihood of being left behind by current digital inclusion initiatives, as well as the significant amount they can gain from increasing their basic digital skills.

Peer mentoring is widespread, and especially well-used in the mental health and prison sectors, it has a strong track-record in the support of individuals with complex needs. Peer mentoring is predominantly used for institutional and social support programmes, Reboot UK will use the peer mentoring expertise od specialist services to explore potential for scalable peer-mentoring education programmes in specialist provision. Academic literature supports the role that home access has in developing meaningful and fluent use of technology. While small-scale home access projects have had positive results, little has been done to explore ways in which home access schemes can be scaled.

Target audiences

There are many barriers to acquiring basic digital skills and fluency, even more so for individuals with multiple disadvantages. In the report these disadvantages include poverty, homelessness, and poor mental health. Internet fluency refers to a person's ability to navigate and utilise the internet for a wide variety of tasks. As the internet is used for both a number of activities and on a number of devices, internet fluency accounts for a range of technical, social and operational skills. It also requires an adequate amount of literacy, numeracy and information literacy.

There are pragmatic reasons for gaining internet access, as the UK government requires it for several of its services. It offers convenience for individuals who prefer online services over off line. The welfare system is moving towards a digital by default model, meaning those requiring access to welfare and benefits will face pressure to use the internet. A Citizens Advice survey highlighted that claimants have a lack of confidence and increased anxiety when applying for benefits online, and had issues over the lack of privacy when entering personal data online and the security of the storage of said data.

These issues of low confidence, anxiety and mental health can be compounded by mandated internet use, especially when it has a direct effect on household and personal income.

Key Interventions

Reboot UK will focus on 3 key interventions:

Peer Support

The peer support model will train and support mentors with experience of a condition or services to engage fellow service users in informal learning. The programme will focus on the peer-led development of digital skills.

Home Access

The home access model will loan and grant internet-enabled devices to beneficiaries.

Shared Practice

The shared practice strand will focus on the development of cross-organisational working. Primarily, it will develop the provision of digital skills and informal learning within specialist services, such as community mental health services, psychiatric care, and homelessness services.