Digital inclusion in Dumbiedykes
Working with residents to improve internet access
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Key learning

- Edinburgh’s city centre free WiFi coverage stops at the threshold of Dumbiedykes.
- In 2019, just **51.9%** of Edinburgh social housing respondents had internet access at home (including phone access) compared to an average of **88%** of all Scottish homes.
- Over 1,000 households in Dumbiedykes are socially-rented.
- Affordability, skills, confidence and access to equipment are all barriers contributing to digital exclusion among Dumbiedykes residents. Digital exclusion affects all ages.
- The topography of the Dumbiedykes estate, combined with distanced access to public transport, makes it harder for some people with mobility impairments, young children, some mental health conditions or other factors to physically leave it. This makes digital inclusion as essential as other basic utilities.
- A number of Dumbiedykes residents experience severe financial hardship, as seen through the Cyrenians’ community food pantry for residents, which is consistently over-subscribed.
- There are several assets currently under-utilised which could, with modest investment and/or appropriate permission, improve digital inclusion in Dumbiedykes:
  - All properties in the Dumbiedykes estate have full fibre internet cable laid to their front door.
  - Several technical partners may be willing to collaborate on a connectivity solution, for a fee.
  - Some residents have excellent digital and/or people skills they are willing to share.
  - A fully-equipped, local authority-owned IT training suite is located in the Holyrood Court tower block within the Dumbiedykes estate. Local reports are that it is mostly unused.
  - The Braidwood Centre, also within the estate, offers good amenity indoor space for residents to potentially come together. This space has also been under-used in recent years.
  - Advancement of 4/5G mobile hotspot technology means that multiple households might enjoy good internet access through a single SIM-powered modem for modest up-front and ongoing costs.
- Identified barriers to implementing a digital inclusion solution(s) are:
  - Cheaper social tariffs for both broadband and 4/5G internet access are still unaffordable for many people.
  - No longer-term, reliable source of funds has been identified to finance building- or estate-wide solutions.
  - No organisation is yet willing to act as a virtual internet service provider for a building-/estate-wide solution. This role would include making decisions about appropriate usage.
  - It is not currently possible for residents or third-sector groups active in the estate to access the physical community spaces in Dumbiedykes.
  - Residents do not yet have the capacity and other resources needed to self-organise to the level that would allow creation of a stable, inclusive, resident-led constituted group.
  - For complex reasons, some residents have strong negative emotions about outside agencies. This currently inhibits community development support being provided by third and public sector organisations.
  - **Stop press:** As of 11 August 2023, one of the key technical partners with a possible solution for Dumbiedykes is withdrawing from the Old Town. This may reduce the likelihood of this partner collaborating on a solution ([Edinburgh Evening News, 3rd August 2023](https://www.edinburgh.eveningnews.co.uk/article/2699323/dumbiedykes-free-wifi-pocket-wage-walks/)).
Introduction

Since 2016, Edinburgh’s Greyfriars Charteris Centre, the University of Edinburgh and the Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust have been providing digital inclusion support to communities in Edinburgh’s Old Town and Pleasance areas. From spring 2022 until spring 2023, work specifically with and for Dumbiedykes residents has taken place, supported by the University’s Edinburgh Futures Institute.

By informing local authority staff and elected representatives about the needs and assets of Dumbiedykes residents, we can support residents to obtain the online access they need and want. Our work has made visible some needs and opportunities about which there is not wide awareness.

In the post-Covid world, digital inclusion is a basic need of all Edinburgh citizens as the internet is required to access essential services. Digital inclusion is especially vital for individuals who, due to disability, health or family circumstances, find it harder to access services in-person. It is also essential for education.

Activities which have informed this briefing

- Ongoing: Meetings of the wider Dumbiedykes Working Group.
- February 2023: Visit to Holyrood Court IT training suite by a resident, Council, University, and Crannie.
- Sat 24 September 2022: Dumbiedykes Gala Day.
  - Structured consultation and feedback with 31 residents.
  - Informal conversations with residents during planning and on day.
- 28 August 2022: Drop-in consultation at Crannie Open Day.
- 5 August 2022: Visit to Cyrenians Community Pantry at the Braidwood Centre.
  - Structured conversations with ~6 Pantry members outside the Centre.
- June-November 2022: Conversations with small number of individual residents and three key technical partners (WeLink, City Fibre, CommsWorld/Essential Cloud Solutions).
- Spring 2022: University of Edinburgh student group research projects on Dumbiedykes (two projects).
  - Both projects focussed on digital inclusion.
- Spring 2021: ‘15-Minute City’ student group research projects on Dumbiedykes (two projects).
  - Text mining and interviews; digital access flagged as a particular need.
- 2021-22: Scoping of technical options by Greyfriars Charteris Centre.
- 2020-22: The Crannie runs Digital Buddies project, addressing skills and internet access.
  - Providing 1:1 support to Old Town residents, with Dumbiedykes in scope.
  - Initially funded by University of Edinburgh community grant.
  - Support from Scottish Government Connecting Scotland programme.
- 2019: City of Edinburgh Council questionnaire to its social housing tenants.
  - Included a question about internet access at home.
- October 2018: ‘Go Deep’ event at Greyfriars Charteris Centre.
  - Neighbourhood community-building event which had Dumbiedykes resident participation.
- 2016-19: Basic digital skills classes run out of the Greyfriars Charteris Centre.
  - Student volunteers coordinated by the University of Edinburgh.
  - Supported BAME women and older people living near the Centre.
What Dumbiedykes residents value, need and want

Table 1 shows the findings from a poll of residents at the September 2022 Dumbiedykes Gala Day. A small group of residents worked with colleagues at the University of Edinburgh to compile the list of options. (Human error meant that the energy bill/cost of living option was accidentally omitted from the survey form on the day.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“What would you like to see for Dumbiedykes?”</th>
<th>Anonymised response count (n=31)</th>
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<th>Anonymised response count (n=31)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book club</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Free computers</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film night</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Kids clubs</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cookery classes</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Healthy living info</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Affordable cafe</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Fitness classes</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Help with computer skills</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Counselling courses</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with internet access</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Energy bills/cost of living advice and support</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Paper survey responses from 2022 Gala Day

These findings chime with themes emerging from earlier and more recent work, including the 2021 student thematic text mining and interview research.

Image 1 shows the breakdown of housing ownership and landlord-type in Dumbiedykes based on 2011 Office for National Statistics Census data:

Image 1: Housing ownership and landlord-type in Dumbiedykes (Digimap)

Of the 2,894 households in the geographic area shown (which also includes small areas outside the Dumbiedykes estate), **1,067 households were socially-rented.**
Census data analysed through Digimap also reveals the following about the Dumbiedykes community:

- Relatively high levels of **unskilled manual workers, retired and unemployed** people.
- Relatively high levels of people with **no qualifications** in sizeable parts of the estate.
- Again in sizeable parts, high levels of people whose **health impacts their daily activities a lot**.
- High levels of **lone parents** and households with **one or two dependent children**.

**Image 2: Demographic profile of Dumbiedykes internet users (Digimap)**

A shown by image 2, data from the 2018 Internet User Classification (IUC) characterizes internet users within Dumbiedykes as ‘Youthful Urban Fringe’, a demographic group characterised by **young people** living on the edges of city centres who are of primarily **minority ethnic origin**.

**Image 3: Bus stop and shop proximity to Dumbiedykes (City of Edinburgh Council atlas)**

Image 3 shows the **proximity of all types of shops and bus stops** to the Dumbiedykes estate and is based on 2015 data available within the City of Edinburgh Council’s Atlas. More recent student research projects reflect a similar picture. The two shops shown in Dumbiedykes in 2015 data are no longer there.
Image 4 shows the terrain contour within Dumbiedykes. The contour lines are closer together compared to nearby populated areas, showing steeper changes of terrain height.

People who contributed
This briefing is based on work driven by:

- Hollie Ruddick and Dove Ashrowan (formerly Carol Clarkson and Malin Wollberg), The Crannie, Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust.
- Daniel Fisher (previously Dan Rous), Greyfriars Charteris Centre.
- Dr Winston Kwon and past ‘Organising for Social Change’ students from the University of Edinburgh.
- Prof Lesley McAra CBE, Dr Ben Fletcher-Watson, Dr Patricia Erskine, Dr Sarah Anderson (briefing author) and Iona Barrie, The University of Edinburgh.

The involvement of the following people was also essential:

- Dumbiedykes residents who led the organisation of the 2022 Gala Day, plus all ~120 who came.
- The local Edinburgh resident who runs the Dumbiedykes Matters Facebook page.
- Former members of the Braidwood Centre’s Management Committee.
- Residents who formed the informal Dumbiedykes People working group.
- Dumbiedykes residents who are members of the Cyrenians Community Pantry.
- All the community organisations, staff and volunteers who are members of the Dumbiedykes Working Group, especially Cyrenians, Access to Industry, Canongate Youth, Edinburgh and Lothians Greenspace Trust and Royal Mile Primary School.
- Paul Powrie, South East Public Health Practitioner, NHS Lothian.
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- Paul Wakefield, City Fibre.
- Colleagues in the University of Edinburgh’s Edinburgh Futures Institute, Information Services, School of Informatics and Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies.
- Councillor Finlay McFarlane, Scottish National Party, City Centre ward.
- Councillor Jo Mowat, Scottish Conservative party, City Centre ward.
- Sam Reymbaut and Thuy Vo, CommsWorld/Essential Cloud Solutions.
- Natalie Duffield, Stewart King, Alistair Ford and Michael Davison, WeLink UK.