

Children and the Digital World: final report

May 2022



Contents

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----------|
| 1.0 | Foreword by the Chair of the Project Steering Group | 3 |
| 2.0 | Introduction | 4 |
| 3.0 | Summary | 5 |
| 4.0 | Project Governance | 8 |
| 5.0 | Methodology | 10 |
| 6.0 | Findings | 12 |
| 7.0 | Conclusions from findings | 18 |
| 8.0 | Insights and proposed actions | 24 |
| 9.0 | Conclusion | 35 |
| 10.0 | Contributions | 36 |
| 11.0 | References | 37 |

Cover images: provided by children and young people to explain the impact of Covid-19 as part of the project fieldwork.

1.0 Foreword by Chair of the Project Steering Group, Deputy Martin

The aim of this project was to 'harness the good and limit the harm' moving out of the pandemic and while COVID-19 remains with us, this work was well timed to help us move forward by understanding the positives that have come from so many aspects of children's lives being forced online and identifying those areas that we need to address to protect children and demonstrate our commitment to 'putting children first'.

The fieldwork collected saddening responses from children that referred to addiction and anxiety associated with their use of digital devices but also inspiring comments showing children self-imposing restrictions and the increase in many digital skills.

I am confident that this project will contribute to our understanding of the impact the pandemic has had on the island's children and young people and, with this information, we can insightfully develop the policy and practice areas that will make a difference.

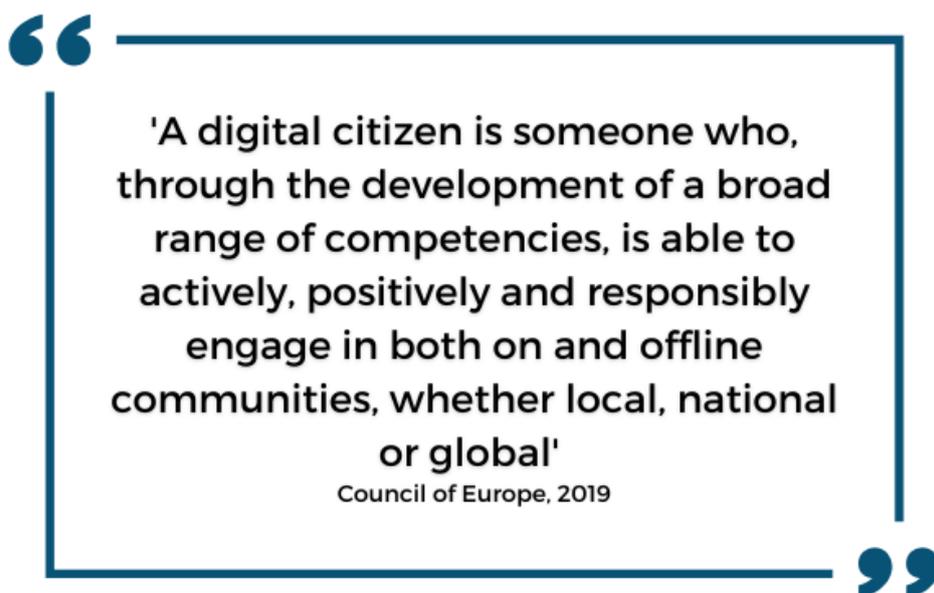
This project has collected an important insight into the way children engage in the digital world and I would like to thank everyone who was involved in this process.

2.0 Introduction

In 2021, the Children and the Digital World project was commissioned by the Chief Minister to examine the extent to which children's experiences during the COVID-19 period have changed their relationship with the digital world and how policy and practice can 'harness the good and limit the harm' moving out of the pandemic.

The aim of the project was to provide an understanding of how the digital world shapes children's lives, so that future Government policy can work to ensure children are supported to become active, safe and empowered digital citizens.

Following a literature review, the Steering Group explored a number of possible areas of primary focus before selecting digital citizenship.



This focus on the area of digital citizenship enabled the project to explore levels of confidence and competence in the skills required to engage safely and positively online. By concentrating on skills, the project could also investigate any patterns in the skills demonstrated by children and young people, identify evolving as well as declining skillsets, recognise opportunities for development and support and review the impact of COVID-19 on all of these elements.

This report provides a summary of the work that has been undertaken and presents a set of insights and proposed actions that support the aim of the project.

3.0 Summary

Primary fieldwork to engage with children and young people, parents/carers, teachers, youth work practitioners and other stakeholders was delivered using a combination of consultation tools.

The findings from the consultation identified that the COVID-19 pandemic had indeed impacted children and young people's relationship with technology which is not surprising, given that most elements of their lives including education, play and socialisation were shifted to online platforms, as one participant in the consultation said, 'it was the only thing anyone could do.'

The project also found that screen time had generally increased since COVID-19 and, in many cases, usage had not reduced to pre-pandemic levels.

This was coupled with a high level of self-awareness amongst the children and young people (10-18 years) who acknowledged that they spent 'too much' time online and used words such as addiction and anxiety when referring to their use of devices and/or specific applications along with a drive for this to change.



**'I would like to be able to manage the
time I spend online more easily,
without feeling addicted to going on
social media'**

Online survey response, 10-13 year old



The skills that were identified as increasing as a result of spending more time online were largely focused around using new apps and platforms including those needed to complete

schoolwork and digital communication tools to keep in touch with family and friends. The most significant method in which these skills were learnt was through self-teaching. Not surprisingly, a low level of confidence was recorded in regard to the skills to manage screen time and an opportunity to improve skills affecting digital security was identified.

A decline in the social skills important to engagement in the non-digital world was recorded and some children and young people were still struggling with motivation to return to pre-pandemic routines and hobbies.

All of the stakeholder groups included in the consultation expressed the need for greater support for children and young people and that those who provide a support system need the tools and resources to do so.

This project set out to provide an understanding of how the digital world shapes children's lives and one of the most important findings identified by the literature review and reaffirmed by the primary fieldwork was the interconnectivity between the digital world and the non-digital or physical world for children and young people.

The insights and proposed actions in this report have been developed using this interconnectivity as a lens in which to design, deliver and evaluate policy and practice so the digital and non-digital can work together to benefit children and young people.

The use of citizenship, which 'involves developing the knowledge, skills and confidence to enable people to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for their own lives and communities' (Young Citizens, 2021), is proposed as a framework to develop lifelong skills essential for engagement in the digital and non-digital world.

Alongside this, is the investment in ongoing support and engagement across the community, primarily focused on parents, carers and family members that have childcare responsibilities. These individuals influence children's online engagement and there is an opportunity to equip them at an early stage to help prevent the potential harms of the digital world.

Establishing and achieving a common level of digital skill amongst all education practitioners is also essential, as is engaging with children and young people themselves so their lived experience can continue to inform policy and practice.

While digital citizenship was generally an unfamiliar term to the children and young people who engaged with this project, they understood the meaning to be a positive and respectful online environment and this is a positive starting point which can be strengthened by a holistic approach, greater collaboration and investment in skills and support networks.

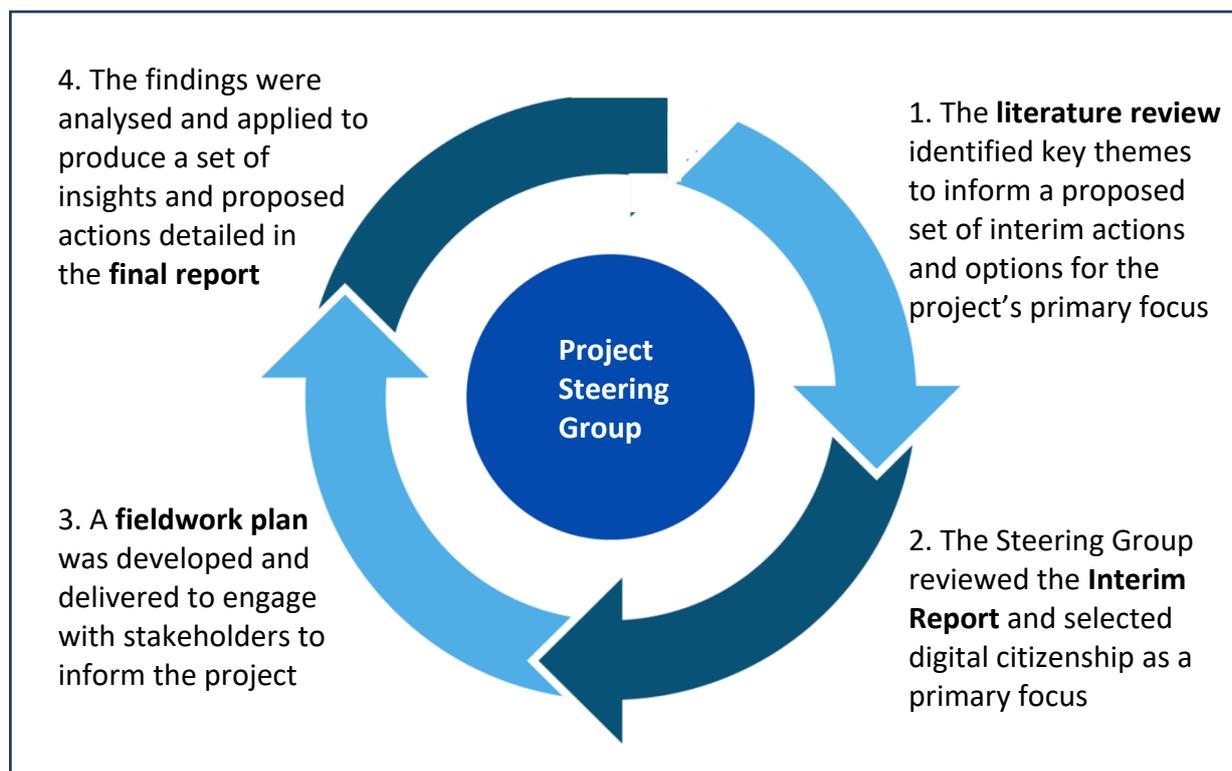
“Digital citizenship means that in the same way I belong to human society, and have a responsibility to behave lawfully and treat all people with respect, I have a duty to be a good online citizen. To me, this entails honesty and transparency when I am selling goods and communicating respectfully with other sellers. Above all, it means to report hate messages I see online and always act with kindness and good intentions when posting on social media”

Closed online community response, 16-18 year old

4.0 Project Governance

4.1 Summary

The diagram below summarises the project stages governed by the Project Steering Group:



4.2 Steering Group

The Steering Group met regularly throughout the project and the Group's members represented the following areas:

- Minister for Social Security (Chair)
- Chief Minister (Vice Chair)
- Office of the Children's Commissioner
- Children, Young People, Education and Skills Department: Primary School representative, Secondary School representative, Senior Advisor to Schools, Children's Health and Wellbeing and Commissioning and Service Redesign
- States of Jersey Police

- Parental representative
- Youth Work representative
- Digital Jersey
- Department of the Economy: Digital Economy
- Strategic Policy, Planning and Performance Department: Children's Policy

4.3 Parameters

The following parameters were agreed at the start of the project:

By assessing the impact of the pandemic on the digital engagement of children, we will better understand:

- How children access in the digital world.
- How children engage with the digital world
- How children manage their time in the digital world
- Digital opportunities for children and how these can be harnessed
- Benefits and harms borne out of the sudden digitisation of many aspects of their lived experience during the pandemic
- How we can support parents and caregivers and help children develop into responsible and confident digital citizens
- Should schools have a more consistent approach in addressing private digital access and use
- What positives we can build upon and what interventions may be necessary from a policy perspective
- What is the proportionality of engagement between the digital world and relationships in physical (real) world

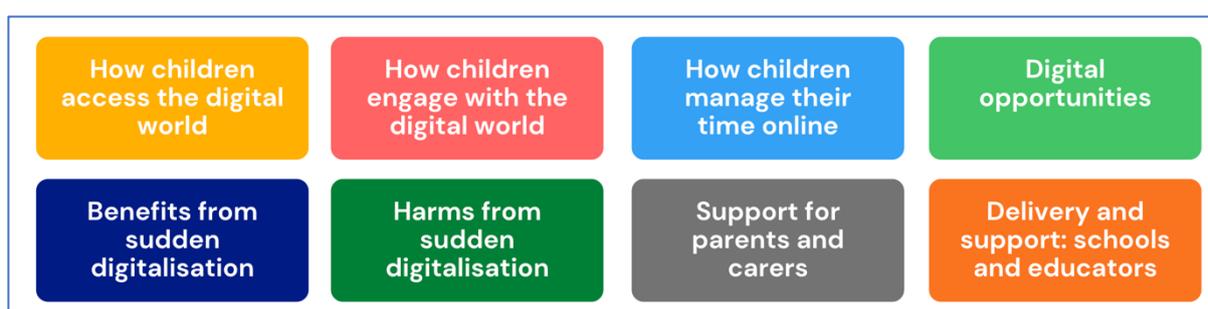
The Steering Group agreed that the project would focus on the experience of children that could access the digital world, rather than exploring the digital divide and its contributory factors.

5.0 Methodology

5.1 Literature review

The first stage of the project included a literature review that aimed to develop a set of themes from which the primary focus for the project could be decided and a set of interim actions could be proposed.

The themes that provided a framework to capture insight from existing local, national and international sources is shown below:



5.2 Fieldwork

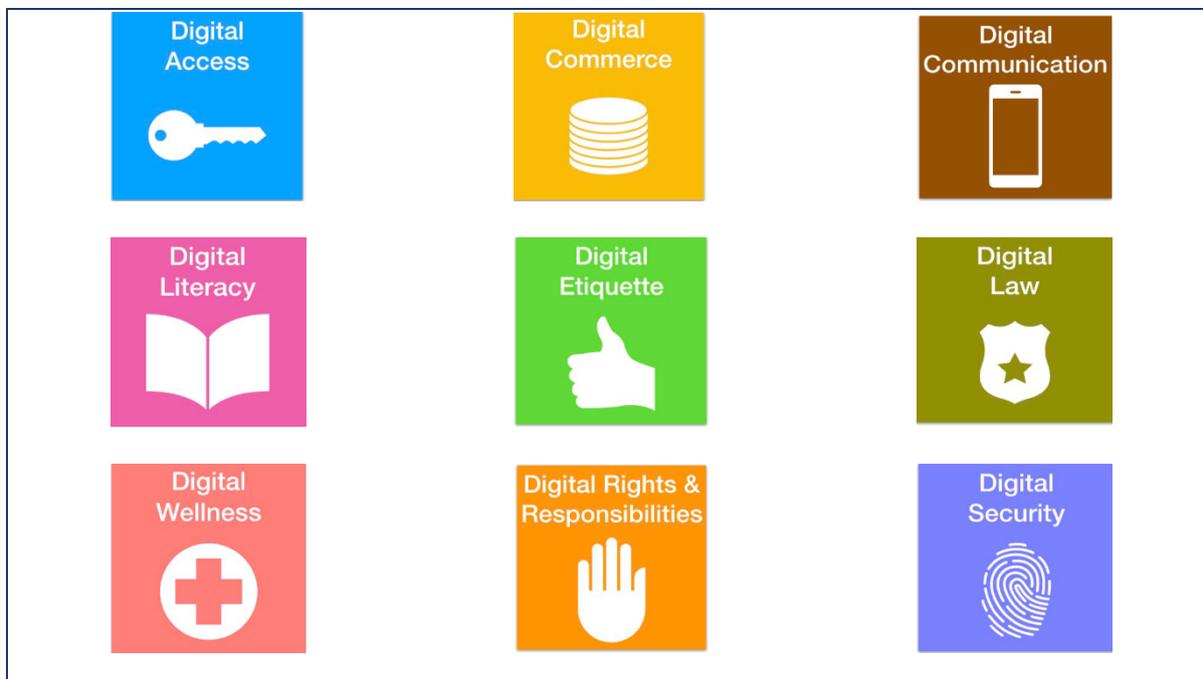
One of the project's objectives was to capture the lived technological experience of children and so engaging directly with children and young people so that their voice was heard in the project's findings and recommendations was essential.

It was also important to capture the views and experiences of those that play a role in children's digital engagement.

In order to engage with the different stakeholders, the primary fieldwork was delivered using a blended consultation model that incorporated the following methods:

| Stakeholder | Consultation tool |
|---|-------------------------|
| Children and young people (10-18 years) | Online survey |
| Children and young people (16-18 years) | Closed online community |
| Parents | Focus groups |
| Teachers | |
| Youth work practitioners | |
| States of Jersey Police | Meetings |
| Jersey Office of the Information Commissioner | |
| Telecommunication providers | |
| Government of Jersey Children's Health and Wellbeing Department | |

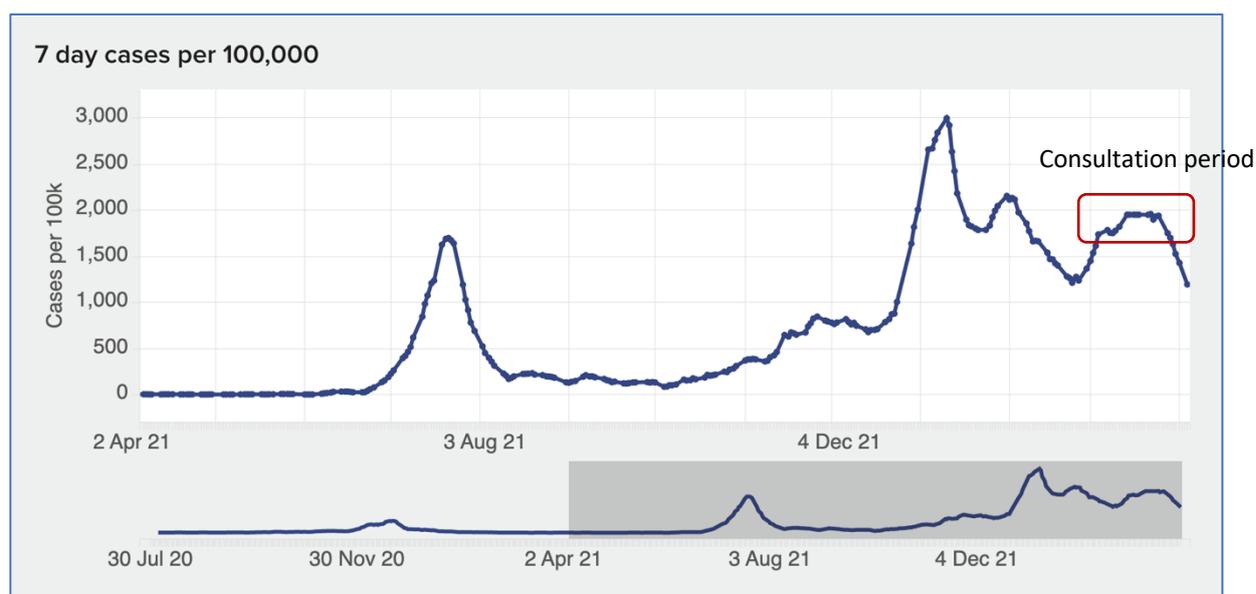
The questions and activities included in the consultation tools were all underpinned by the nine elements of digital citizenship model (Ribble and Bailey, 2007) shown below. This ensured digital citizenship remained a primary focus, framed by the impact of COVID-19.



6.0 Findings

6.1 Impact of COVID-19 and worldwide events

During the consultation period (28 February – 25th March), the number of cases of COVID-19 increased on the island as shown below:



Source: <https://www.gov.je/Health/Coronavirus/pages/coronaviruscases.aspx#tab>

This negatively impacted the consultation as many schools experienced levels of staff absence and this also affected the availability of the focus group members.

News items and current events including the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Red Nose Day were also topics delivered in schools within the consultation period. This resulted in many competing demands on teachers, timetables and newsletter space.

6.2 Literature review

6.2.1 Relationship between the digital and non-digital world

The proportionality of engagement between the digital and non-digital world is included in the project parameters shown in section 4.3 but this was not included as a theme within the literature review as it was realised that this was relevant across all of the themes.

Members of the Steering Group were quick to emphasise that children and young people live fully in a digital world and cannot separate between virtual and real life and this was supported by the sources included in the literature review.

For many adults, this is a challenging concept as we may be able to remember life before the internet became embedded in the every day and we are equipped with skills that enable us to remove ourselves from the digital environment.

However, understanding the interconnectivity of the digital and non-digital worlds is essential to understanding the lived experience of children and young people.

6.2.2 Key themes

The key themes raised by the literature review were as follows:

Barriers to access: a digital divide was identified in terms of those children that have sufficient and appropriate device availability and connectivity and those that do not. This is a barrier between children and the digital world and while the project focuses on those that can engage online, it is important to note that children without sufficient digital access are also restricted in terms of access to education, social networks, play and information.

The crucial role of parents/carers: how parents/carers access and engage online is a significant influence on children. Parents/carers are the 'gate openers' and 'gate keepers' (The London School of Economics and Political Science, 2019) for children and the digital world and this project identified that while parents/carers may have strategies in place to

manage their child's activity, there is an opportunity to re-focus conversations within the home to support the development of behaviours central to digital citizenship and review how best to provide support.

Digital footprints: a child's digital profile may be established before they are born by parents-to-be sharing information on social media and via pregnancy apps. This over sharing ('sharenting') is an area of concern raised both by children who can feel uncomfortable by the information shared about them and by considering children's rights surrounding privacy, data protection and participation. To put this in perspective, findings referenced in the literature review show that 'by the age of 13, parents have posted over 1300 photos and videos of their child to social media' (Children's Commissioner for England, 2018) and this statistic is likely to be at least similar for Jersey due to the levels of digital device ownership and connectivity.

Digital citizenship: there has been a broadening of focus in approaches to digital education from internet safety to digital citizenship. This change promotes the development of children's life skills in the digital space such as critical thinking, problem solving and self-awareness. The guidance and support available for parents/carers and educators must be aligned with this shift, along with overarching awareness of children rights.

Education delivery: the sudden digitalisation of education was a core theme of the literature review. The findings show that there are many benefits and positive opportunities by delivering and continuing to deliver elements of formal education online and, conversely, that some learner needs are best supported offline. The need for investment in IT equipment and in maintaining education practitioners' levels of digital literacy was identified as it is essential that educators are proficient in the safe delivery of digital education.

System Governance: child-friendly policies, representation on digital projects by child protection experts and alignment of the messages communicated by service providers were identified as requirements in order to ensure a holistic and consistent approach to children's engagement in the digital world.

6.2.3 Interim actions

An interim report was published to the Steering Group that outlined the findings of the literature review and proposed a number of interim actions.

All of the actions except one were handed over to relevant departments to either take forward or to close, for example high levels of device ownership by children raised safety concerns but data from the States of Jersey Police evidenced that device theft was not a concern and so no further action was taken; and findings regarding the digital divide and education delivery were shared with CYPES to inform the Education Reform Programme.

The one remaining action focused on community education opportunities, specifically to upskill parents and carers, including family members with childcare responsibilities such as grandparents.

Exploratory work was carried out and the Project Steering Group agreed that as the primary focus for the project related closely to digital skills, this opportunity would be informed by the final project findings.

6.3 Primary fieldwork

The following themes were identified from the analysis of the consultation:

Screen time and controls: the project findings identified that children and young people's screen time had generally increased since COVID-19 and many responses reflected that usage had not reduced to pre-pandemic levels. The consultation responses from children and young people showed a strong self-awareness regarding screen time and, while some had set their own restrictions, the aim to spend less time online was frequently mentioned. Generally a low level of awareness and use of the tools available to monitor use and restrict screen time was found in the responses from parents/carers.

Social skills and life skills: a perceived decline in social skills as a consequence of increased digital engagement was identified. The most commonly referred to social skills were eye contact and confidence in face to face social situations. A decline in motivation attached to getting back to previous routines (i.e. waking up and going to school) and returning to hobbies and activities such as football and reading were also recorded. Interestingly, the importance of measuring skills that were regarded as important due to their current or past value was raised in a stakeholder meeting and can be summarised by the comment that 'we need to be judging by the future not today'.

Mental health and wellbeing: anxiety around phone use and specific applications was recorded and the term 'addiction' in the context of a device or a specific app was received from respondents as young as the 10-13 year old category. Concerns regarding cyberbullying, scams, fake news, digital footprints, inappropriate content and/or contact with strangers were received in all of the consultation tools. This was accompanied by the need for support to develop skills and awareness. The opportunities the digital world provides to support mental health was raised alongside the benefits online engagement can deliver for individuals with certain neurological, psychological and/or physical needs.

Digital skills: the findings identified a high level of confidence in children and young people's digital communication skills. There was a discrepancy in the perceived and actual confidence in children and young people asking for advice as the adult focus group participants thought children and young people would be confident in asking for support whereas this was one of the lowest scoring responses from children and young people. A low level of confidence was also recorded in regard to managing screen time and digital security, specifically around the use of personal data by companies which can be perceived as an invisible and unlikely risk, albeit one that was described as having potentially 'catastrophic' consequences. These findings were accompanied by the need for support to increase digital skills across the community and this included education, controls, restrictions, government policy and multi-agency roles.

Importance of the digital world: the findings reflected the significance of the digital world in all elements of children and young people's lives and reinforced that this was not going to change due to the declining impact of the pandemic. The responses captured positive and negative experiences of digital engagement and showed the need for a blended approach of online and offline as different mediums will serve to benefit different individuals. Some responses emphasised the interconnection between the digital and non-digital world for children and young people and the importance of a support network and the provision of tools and resources which are relevant and effective to the technology and digital engagement of today.

7.0 Conclusions from findings

This project identified that the COVID-19 pandemic had indeed impacted children and young people's relationship with technology which is not surprising, given that most elements of their lives including education, play and socialisation were shifted to online platforms, as one respondent in the online community said, 'it was the only thing anyone could do.'

The findings show that screen time had generally increased since COVID-19 and, in many cases, usage had not reduced to pre-pandemic levels.

A summary of the positives and negatives to enable the project to harness the good and limit the harm moving out of the pandemic are provided below.

7.1 Opportunities to harness the good

Online services and delivery: the transition of services such as learning, mental health support and medical appointments was beneficial in that it maintained some service delivery and it also realised benefits to some children and young people whose needs and styles were better suited to an online environment. Equally, it identified that offline delivery was beneficial for others. This emphasises the important role digital delivery can have and the importance of a blended approach that has flexible delivery models to suit the end user.

Acceleration of skills: in general children and young people agreed that COVID-19 had been a causal factor in learning new online skills. This was more apparent in the younger age groups and with those whose screen time had increased. The new skills were largely focused around using new apps and platforms including those needed to complete schoolwork and digital communication tools. The most significant method in which these skills were learnt was through self-teaching.

Self-awareness: a strong self-awareness regarding screen time was identified and children and young people expressed a will to spend less time online as shown in the example below:

“

'I would like to be able to manage the time I spend online more easily, without feeling addicted to going on social media'

Online survey response, 10-13 year old

”

An overall low level of confidence was also recorded in regard to the skills to manage screen time amongst children and young people but there was evidence of some self-imposed restrictions amongst 16-18 year olds which correlates with the survey results that show the feeling of 'too much' screen time increased with children's age.

This self-awareness reflects a strong level of the digital citizenship elements of digital literacy and digital etiquette, which include core skills such as awareness, critical thinking and decision making to support good decision making and positive online behaviour.

Established digital practice: while adults may be able to separate their online and offline worlds, these are fully integrated for children and young people and digital engagement has been accelerated due to COVID-19. This provides an opportunity to assess ways in which the digital world can enhance the delivery of services to children and young people, whether this be to maximise engagement and/or to support different needs and styles. This is summarised by a comment made in the stakeholder meetings:

“

'Young people do everything
online and we have to work
with that'

Stakeholder meeting response

”

Opportunity for support: a number of the findings identified opportunities to support children and young people, these included screen time management, mental health concerns linked to device use and content and digital security in regard to personal information. There was also a disconnect between the perceived and actual confidence in children and young people in asking for advice and this presents an opportunity to support the digital citizenship element of digital wellness in regard to management techniques as well as developing support networks. The overall low level of awareness and use of the tools available to support digital engagement within the home by parents/carers also identifies an opportunity to support a wider set of stakeholders.

Future skills: as the digital world has become part of children's everyday lives and technology is continuing to evolve, the project identified an opportunity to rethink the skills and measures which we value today and evaluate their relevance.

“

'The digital world is here.
We need to equip all of society
so they can use it safely'
Stakeholder meeting response

”

7.2 Opportunities to limit the harm

Reliance on digital: while the use of digital platforms has had many positive impacts, the project has identified the difficulties with exclusive online delivery as this fails to support different needs and is linked to feelings of boredom, isolation, missing out and low levels of focus and motivation. While the positive use of digital platforms has been emphasised, it is equally important to acknowledge the importance of offline delivery.

Social skills: a decline in social skills important to engagement in the non-digital physical world was recorded. This included eye contact and confidence in face to face social situations. This may not be surprising due to the increase of online communication during COVID-19 and the high levels of confidence in digital communication skills recorded in the consultation. Eye contact is challenging online, especially when more than two people participate in a call, and face to face engagement has been forcibly limited. This provides an opportunity for support and development and should be recognised as an outcome from the pandemic.

“

'Due to not being around
people, I am more shy than I
was before'

Online survey response, 17-18 year old

”

Routine and hobbies: a decline in motivation attached to getting back to previous routines (i.e. waking up and going to school) and returning to hobbies and activities such as football and reading was recorded. This may be linked to the impact on social skills and face to face engagement and also to an established habit of more leisure time being spent online.

“

'Going out and about is kind of
harder because I'm always at
home on my phone and don't
bother getting out'

Online survey response, 10-13 year old

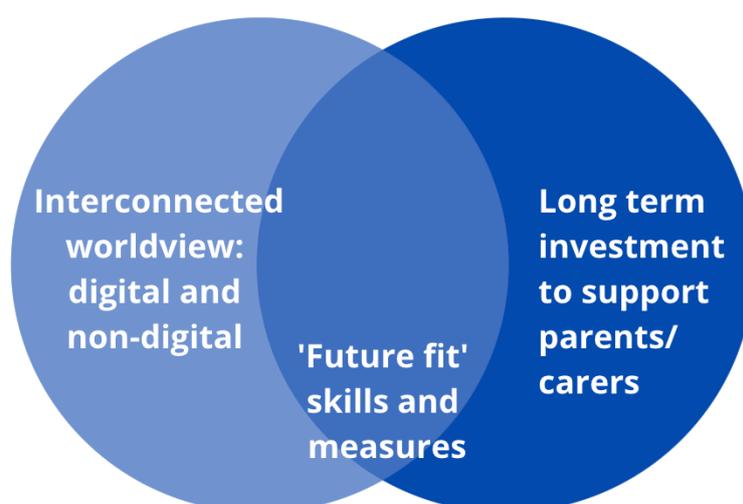
”

Support: the need for support, guidance and controls was expressed across the consultation with suggestions including a multi-agency task force, government imposed censoring/content blocks, workshops for parents/carers and more in school education. This need is supported by the recorded overall low level of awareness and use of the tools available to support digital engagement within the home by parents/carers and the concerns raised regarding digital safety such as protecting personal information and digital literacy such as the identification of fake news and scams.

8.0 Insights and proposed actions

The themes from the literature review and fieldwork engagement and the opportunities to harness the good and limit the harm were considered to identify the key insights generated from the project.

The key insights are explained below. Proposed actions are included against each insight to ensure that the project delivers on its objective to support future policy and practice to ensure children are supported to become active, safe and empowered digital citizens.



8.1 Key insight 1: Interconnected worldview: digital and non-digital

The fluidity between the digital and non-digital experiences for children and young people was identified early in the project and has remained a recurrent theme.

It is essential that both (digital and non-digital) are understood as children's lived experience when designing, delivering and evaluating policy and practice so the digital and non-digital can work together to benefit children and young people.

By understanding children's total experience, a blended approach of digital and non-digital can be developed which can maximise opportunities and address limitations. An example of applying this approach could be developing citizenship skills around personal finance and

money which requires both knowledge and skills relevant to both digital and non-digital and spending/saving and links to skills such as critical thinking and analysing information relevant to scams and banking options.

8.1.1 Proposed actions

| Key Insight 1: Interconnected worldview: digital and non-digital | |
|---|---|
| Summary: Children do not distinguish easily between the digital and non-digital environment. They are treated as the same and form an interconnected worldview | |
| Action A: Policy | Actions B and C: Practice |
| <p>A: Include the commitment to sustainable well-being as defined in the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019 (to include ‘the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the inhabitants of Jersey over successive generations’) in the Government of Jersey’s digital innovation that impacts children and young people.</p> | <p>B: Continue to explore, develop and critically evaluate blended (digital/non-digital) approaches to education and learning to achieve ongoing best practice and continuous improvement.</p> <p>C: Continue to explore, develop and critically evaluate blended (digital/non-digital) approaches to the delivery of children’s mental health and wellbeing health services to achieve ongoing best practice and continuous improvement.</p> |
| <p>Rationale:</p> <p><i>The application of sustainable well-being to the development of children’s digital services will ensure consideration is given to a number of factors with children’s wellbeing at the centre of the design, delivery and evaluation.</i></p> | <p>Rationale:</p> <p><i>The use of digital platforms to provide education and health services during the pandemic revealed benefits and limitations, as does non-digital delivery. Putting a blended approach at the centre of service delivery will support the considered</i></p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <i>evolution of services to meet different needs.</i> |
| Next steps- Leads: Council of Ministers | Next steps – Lead: CYPES Director General |

8.2 Key insight 2: Future fit skills and measures

This project identified evolving and declining skills and this trend of changing skillsets is likely to continue as the digital world evolves and becomes more embedded in children’s everyday lives.

It is essential that children and young people are equipped and supported with the right skills for the future. In addition to understanding what these skills are, the metrics applied to measuring performance should also be revisited to ensure the right things are being measured using an interconnected worldview.

The importance of ensuring skills are fit for future purpose and the relevance of children’s digital / non-digital experiences are evidenced in the comments. This example shows that, when viewing the world through the lens of an interconnected digital and non-digital world, the outcome of recording information could be completed in a variety of ways that may be more inclusive to different learning styles and needs.

“

'Not one of my students have a pen or pencil or paper'
Focus group response

”

“

'As long as they can write things down, does it matter how?'
Stakeholder meeting response

”

8.2.1 Proposed actions

| Key insight 2: Future fit skills and measures | |
|--|---|
| Summary: Key skills and knowledge associated with citizenship from the non-digital world need to be translated into the digital world so that children can understand how to be a responsible and mindful citizen | |
| Action D: Policy | Actions E and F: Practice |
| <p>D: Ensure the development of the new Digital Education Strategy is the focus to develop citizenship skills that cross over into the digital environment.</p> | <p>E: Establish and work towards a common level of digital skills and knowledge for all education practitioners in schools and colleges and continue to ensure skill levels are maintained as technology and teaching practice evolves.</p> <p>F: Ensure the curriculum establishes a common set of citizenship skills applicable to the digital and non-digital world for age appropriate delivery from the early years foundation stage.</p> |
| <p>Rationale:</p> <p><i>‘Citizenship education involves developing the knowledge, skills and confidence to enable people to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for their own lives and communities’ (Young Citizens, 2021). This applies to the digital and non-digital world which share and benefit from the essential elements of knowledge and understanding, skills and values.</i></p> | <p>Rationale:</p> <p><i>E: The need to maintain levels of digital literacy within the teaching community was identified early in this project as it is essential that educators are proficient in the safe delivery of digital education in addition to having the confidence and competence to deliver online learning.</i></p> <p><i>The delivery of skills enhancement and upskilling of practitioners is already underway but this action formalises the</i></p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>For example, developing knowledge and understanding of money is relevant to on and offline spend and links to skills such as critical thinking and analysing information relevant to scams and banking options.</i></p> | <p><i>requirement for digital skills for all practitioners.</i></p> <p><i>F: Developing and supporting citizenship behaviours that enable active and positive engagement in the digital and non-digital world will provide a consistent skillset and address topics raised in this report such as communication (the decline of some social skills), wellbeing (screen time and the importance of offline activities) and safety (use of personal data).</i></p> |
| <p>Next steps – Lead: Minister for Children and Education</p> | <p>Next steps – Lead: E: Leading Officer for Digital Education Strategy F: Lead Officer Standards and Achievement, Education Department</p> |

8.3 Key insight 3: Long term investment to support parents/carers

Parents/carers (including wider family with childcare responsibility) have a significant influence on a child’s digital footprint and digital engagement.

There is an opportunity to develop the digital confidence and competence of parents/carers to upskill the home environment to enable better support and guidance for children and young people.

This project found an overall low level of awareness and use of the tools available to support digital safety within the home by parents/carers and a disparity between the perceived and actual confidence of children and young people in asking for advice.

The consultation also identified opportunities to raise skill levels in digital literacy (skills to make good choices such as awareness and critical thinking), digital etiquette (screen time and how we treat others), digital wellness (digital downtime and support networks) and digital security (use of personal information).

As the digital world is continually evolving and children’s online experiences will be ever changing, it is important that a dialogue is maintained with children and young people to identify key issues. This can inform education and support materials for parents/carers and the community.

8.3.1 Proposed actions

| Key insight 3: Long term investment to support parents/carers | |
|--|--|
| Summary: Developing the digital skills of parents/carers is crucial to enabling better support and guidance for children | |
| Action G: Policy | Actions H-J: Practice |
| G: Ensure the revised future Digital Policy Framework includes a focus on providing community education to develop the digital confidence and competence of parents and carers (to include wider family members with childcare responsibility). | H: Alongside the Digital Education Strategy, develop clear age appropriate guidance (for new parents and parents/carers of children aged 5-18 years) to provide support with promoting key elements of digital citizenship and setting digital boundaries. I: Ensure that early intervention programmes which form part of the new children's mental health and wellbeing |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>service include information and guidance and support to families with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • screen time guidance, the impact of device use on sleep, recognising the warning signs of addiction and anxiety linked to device use and recognising cyberbullying • explore and pilot alternative non-digital opportunities for children and families where digital use is a high and known to be problematic <p>J: Strengthen the published guidance on the Government of Jersey website including signposting to trusted sources for existing applications to support the monitoring and control of children’s device use.</p> |
| <p>Rationale:</p> <p><i>The influence of parents/carers on a child’s digital footprint can begin before a child is born and they then fulfil the roles of the ‘gate openers’ and ‘gate keepers’ for children’s online engagement.</i></p> <p><i>The project identified opportunities to support parents/carers to develop skills across a number of the elements of digital citizenships.</i></p> | <p>Rationale:</p> <p><i>H and I: There is an opportunity to equip parents/carers and parents to be with the knowledge and skills to set digital boundaries for themselves (as key influencers) and their children. This early intervention considers the potential impact to children’s wellbeing and provides a foundation for positive digital engagement</i></p> <p>.</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>There are examples of good practice to support awareness and education programmes that upskilling parents/carers at various ages of children's childhood. These programmes aim to support parents within the home to achieve a safe and positive online experience with their children.</i></p> <p><i>Many adults reported learning from young people how to operate devices and understand their functionality. It is essential that children and young people inform local awareness programme so the content remains relevant.</i></p> | <p><i>This project identified a real challenge for some children and young people to return to pre-pandemic hobbies and engage in face to face engagement which in turn impacted negatively on their mental health.</i></p> <p><i>A programme of age appropriate activities developed in consultation with children focused on wellbeing can help to address know harms of excessive use of social media and screen time.</i></p> <p><i>J: A low level of awareness and use of digital controls was found amongst the parents/carers included in the primary fieldwork. A need for an easy and trusted set of 'go to' guidance was also identified. The existing area of the Government of Jersey website can be used to provide reference material.</i></p> |
| <p>Next steps – Lead: Head of Digital Economy (to be shared across relevant departments)</p> | <p>Next steps – Lead: H & I: CYPES Director General J: Group Director Modernisation and Digital</p> |

8.4 Future Governance Policy and Practice

The next Government term of Office will require a revised Common Strategic Policy to be published. This is a critically important Ministerial opportunity for the key policy priorities to

be identified which will form the basis for future policy workstreams which are set out in subsequent annual Government planning cycle. Ministers will be accountable for future policies that impact on children and digital world during this process.

The Children and Young People's Plan describes four overarching outcomes which are important for all children to flourish and thrive during their childhood. The current plan is under review and a revised plan will be published during 2023. The Partnership Board that provides the governance to the plan enables a wide range of partners to work together to deliver programmes that are designed to make a difference to children's lives. There is scope to enable actions proposed in this report to be included in future reporting and governance arrangements going forward.

8.5 Communication of Findings - Informing Covid-19 Recovery work

This project is one of several ongoing work streams being delivered across the Government of Jersey that are assessing the impact of COVID-19.

The findings from this project identified a number of points that are relevant to the pandemic in general, rather than specific to the increased digital engagement of children and young people. These include:

- Increased screen time and anxiety around device use
- Lack of motivation to return to pre-pandemic hobbies and routines
- Decline of social skills important to face to face engagement

As these points are relevant to children's mental health and wellbeing, the Project Officer alongside the Steering Group will take responsibility to share its findings with the aim of adding to the information available to develop an understanding of the impact of COVID-19.

8.6 Summary of proposed actions

A summary of the proposed actions is provided below.

| Key insight 1: Interconnected worldview: digital and non-digital | |
|--|--|
| Proposed Actions | Lead/s |
| A: Include the commitment to sustainable well-being as defined in the Public Finances (Jersey) Law 2019 (to include ‘the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of the inhabitants of Jersey over successive generations’) in the Government of Jersey’s digital innovation that impacts children and young people. | Council of Ministers |
| B: Continue to explore, develop and critically evaluate blended (digital/non-digital) approaches to education and learning to achieve ongoing best practice and continuous improvement. | CYPES Director General |
| C: Continue to explore, develop and critically evaluate blended (digital/non-digital) approaches to the delivery of children’s mental health and wellbeing health services to achieve ongoing best practice and continuous improvement. | CYPES Director General |
| Key insight 2: Future fit skills and measures | |
| Proposed Actions | Lead/s |
| D: Ensure the development of the new Digital Education Strategy is the focus to develop citizenship skills that cross over into the digital environment. | Minister for Children and Education |
| E: Establish and work towards a common level of digital skills and knowledge for all education practitioners in schools and colleges and continue to ensure skill levels are maintained as technology and best practice evolves. | Leading Officer for Digital Education Strategy |
| F: Ensure the curriculum establishes a common set of citizenship skills applicable to the digital and non-digital world for age appropriate delivery from the early years foundation stage. | Lead Officer Standards and Achievement, Education Department |

Key insight 3: Long term investment to support parents/carers

| Proposed Actions | Lead/s |
|--|---|
| <p>G: Ensure the revised future Digital Policy Framework includes a focus on providing community education to develop the digital confidence and competence of parents and carers (to include wider family members with childcare responsibility).</p> | <p>Head of Digital Economy (to be shared across relevant departments)</p> |
| <p>H: Alongside the Digital Education Strategy, develop clear age appropriate guidance (for new parents and parents/carers of children aged 5-18 years) to provide support with promoting key elements of digital citizenship and setting digital boundaries.</p> | <p>CYPES Director General</p> |
| <p>I: Ensure that early intervention programmes which form part of the new children's mental health and wellbeing service include information and guidance and support to families with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • screen time guidance, the impact of device use on sleep, recognising the warning signs of addiction and anxiety linked to device use and recognising cyberbullying • explore and pilot alternative non-digital opportunities for children and families where digital use is a high and known to be problematic | <p>CYPES Director General</p> |
| <p>J: Strengthen the published guidance on the Government of Jersey website including signposting to trusted sources for existing applications to support the monitoring and control of children's device use.</p> | <p>Group Director Modernisation and Digital</p> |

9.0 Conclusion

This report is presented to the Steering Group who are asked to consider the key insights and actions so that these can be handed over to the relevant departmental leads.

The findings from this project are intended to contribute to the work that is ongoing to understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on children and young people, add insight to existing workstreams relating to education reform and support closer working mechanisms that focus on 'putting children first'.

A note of thanks is made to all of the children and young people, parents/carers, teachers, youth practitioners and organisations that took part in the fieldwork.

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The children and young people who participated in the consultation

11.0 References

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