

Grŵp
Cartrefi
Cymunedol
Cymru



Community
Housing
Cymru
Group

Digital Solutions Wales Chief Executive Residential Network

05/02/2014

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Care & Repair Cymru



Regeneration Wales
Adfywio Cymru

One year on.....

- **Task and Finish group created to look at work undertaken on digital inclusion**



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Task and Finish group objective:

“To recommend to the Welsh Government a solution that would assist RSLs with delivering digital inclusion initiatives to enable all tenants to use the internet and have online access within the home”

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Our Work – Step 1

Following a workshop seminar in Rhyader with over 30 RSL representatives to identify common issues and interests, task group members were identified.

The task group has met regularly, researched examples of good practice in the sector, met with a range of ISPs and telecoms experts and visited projects and examined the merits of different solutions.

It has identified key pressure points to finding solutions and separated challenges into distinct work streams.

It produced a comprehensive report presented to members of Welsh Government from the Anti Poverty, Housing and Digital Inclusion teams.

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Barriers to digital inclusion:

1. Availability of internet access within an area
2. Some tenants may have no interest in using the internet
3. Lack of skills
4. Cost of hardware
5. Cost of internet access



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Examples of work by individual RSLs



IT and online training for tenants.

Free installation of PCs in properties.

Computers in community hubs.



Refurbished affordable IT equipment for tenants



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Our research conclusions

1. **Intervention is required**
2. **Digital exclusion remains a severe issue in the social housing sector**
3. **Affordable access within the home is a priority**
4. **RSLs can pursue affordable and adequate broadband for tenants**
5. **There is an overall lack of capacity and expertise to deliver**



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Key bottlenecks and potential work streams

- Digital inclusion activities to enthuse and up skill tenants
- Overcoming problems of landlines and ISP resistance to sharing costs
- Expertise in identifying the best broadband delivery solutions
- Finding the right ISP but on the RSL's terms
- Knowing what tenants want and are willing to pay for
- Charging policy – yes or no
- Using weight of sector to get best deals
- Close proximity and access to a good source of broadband
- Managing local infrastructure solutions
- Helping tenants source equipment
- Levels of support for tenants – both connectivity and maintenance of equipment

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Delivering Solutions (1)

Some work streams are felt best delivered by individual RSLs working alone, or partnering with others, such as:

- **Digital inclusion activities**
 - **Responding to tenant wishes and marketing**
 - **Local support to fix problems in tenants homes**
 - **Individual deals with ISPs to provide a wide range of localised broadband service to tenants**
 - **Practical installation, and maintenance of, equipment in homes – examples of apprentice schemes**
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Delivering Solutions (2)

However some solutions appear better delivered collectively:

- **Acquiring the telecoms expertise to advise on and identify the best local broadband infrastructure solutions**
 - **Sourcing ISPs and influencing their delivery policies**
 - **Brokering deals with ISPs on behalf of RSLs**
 - **Identifying robust and reliable equipment for use by RSLs and tenants**
 - **Using the economy of scale to negotiate terms**
 - **To keep abreast of technical change**
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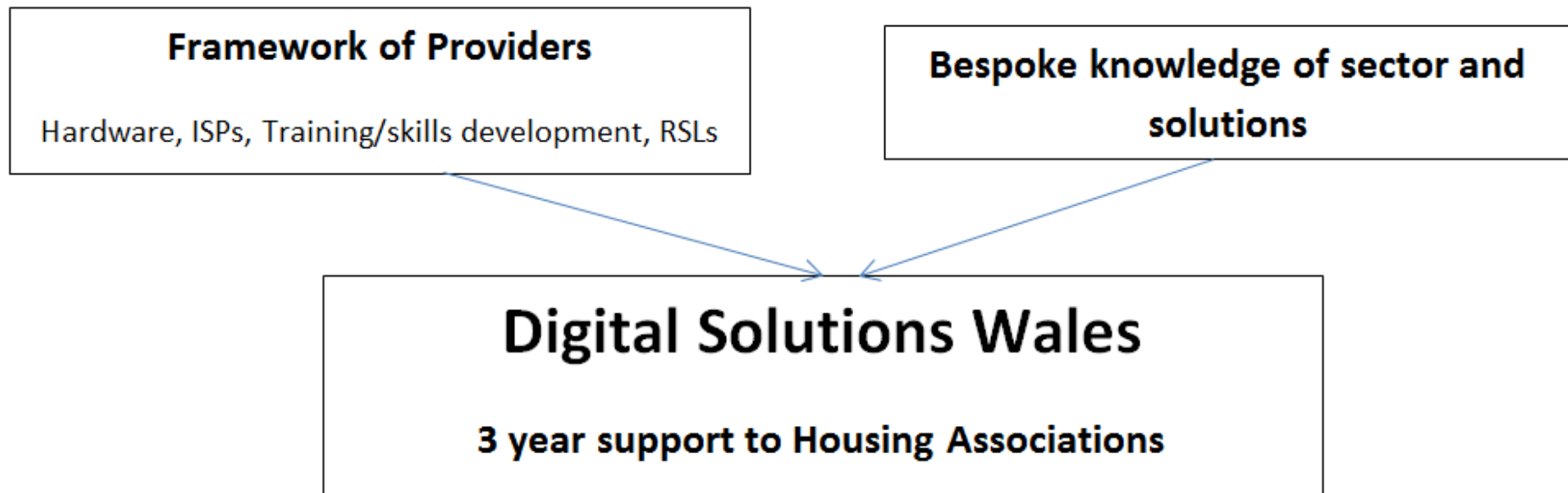
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Our Recommendation

“We recommend that a new entity is created to provide the support needed to assist RSLs with developing adequate and affordable broadband schemes for social housing tenants”

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Our Work – Step 2: Developing a Potential Business Model



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Challenges in preparing Business Model

There are a number of interrelated challenges and questions going forward:

- **Ownership and fit to Social Housing Sector**
- **Primary Work Focus – Services offered**
- **Staffing and costs**
- **How to fund in set up and operational phases**

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Ownership and Fit to Social Housing Sector

For a legal entity, the Task Group preference is a Social Enterprise although other options are possible

However there are a number of options for ownership:

- **Completely free standing with Governance not necessarily from within sector**
- **An arms length entity within CHC**
- **An arms length entity owned by RSLs collectively**
- **An arms length entity partly owned by CHC and RSLs possibly having some WG input**

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Primary Work Focus - Services provided by Digital Solutions Wales

- **Work with the RSL on developing their digital inclusion strategy**
 - **Provide technical expertise to RSLs to design and implement affordable broadband schemes for tenants**
 - **Use a framework of providers to leverage goods and services from ISPs, hardware orgs and digital inclusion orgs (e.g. Comms 2.0) to ensure a full digital inclusion service is provided.**
 - **Broker on behalf of the RSL to drive down cost- making it more affordable to the tenant**
 - **Advise on funding opportunities and provide grant support**
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Staffing and Costs

Project Coordinator

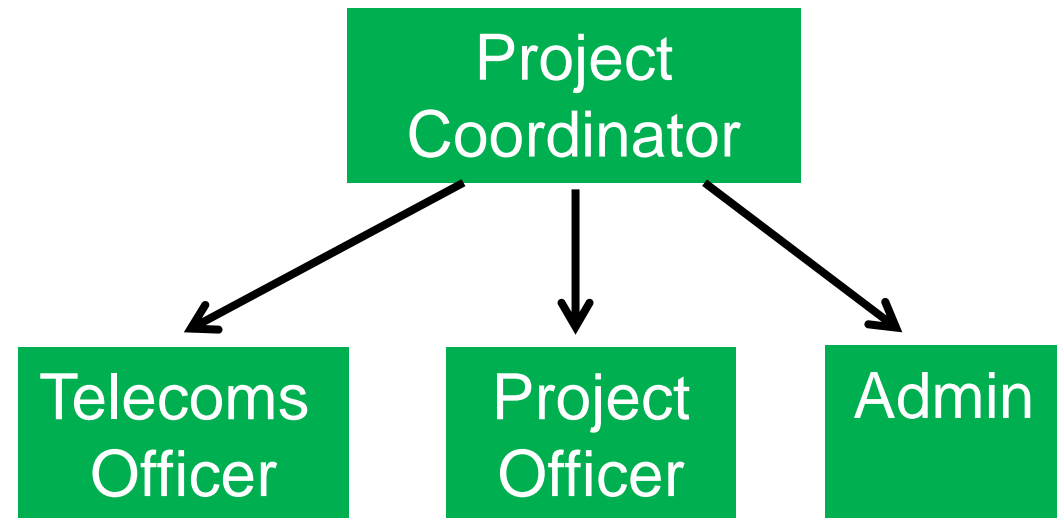
Telecoms Officer

Project Officer

Admin

General office costs

R & D



Annual cost – approx £220k pa

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How to Fund

ON going operations

Charging only model – costs covered by charges for services

Membership model – costs fully covered by member subscriptions

Or- A combination of both

Set up period – prior to service delivery

Costs covered by membership , grants or loans or a combination of these

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Benefits of project

- **Assist with getting tenants online**
 - **Tackle poverty**
 - **Scaled and coordinated approach to digital inclusion**
 - **Will benefit all RSLs**
 - **Gap in market**
 - **Economic and employment opportunities**
 - **Opportunities for sustainability following initial start up funding**
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Purpose of today

- **Identify interest in the sector**
- **Gather interest in potential ownership and governance of this body**
- **Preferred method of using services (membership or other..)**
- **Feedback from you**

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