

Government helping to keep people connected

The Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland programme is aimed at thousands of disadvantaged young people who are being helped to develop valuable digital skills.

More than 23,000 iPads and Chromebooks are being distributed among digitally excluded low-income families and care leavers, as part of the latest phase of the £43 million programme. As well as a new device, recipients also receive mobile data and help to use the internet confidently and safely for up to two years. Connecting Scotland works with local authorities, public bodies and third sector organisations to reach people across the country.

Communities Secretary Aileen Campbell said: "Access to the internet brings huge benefits, especially during these challenging times. It provides a way to keep in touch and keep us informed, and is also an important way for people of all ages to further their education, find work and training opportunities.

"That's why in this year's Programme for Government we further committed to our world-leading Connecting Scotland programme by pledging to reach a total of 50,000 digitally excluded or marginalized people by the end of 2021. The combination of a device plus ongoing support means that everyone can get the most out of their laptop or tablet, and develop their skills.

"So far more than 8,700 people have received this package,

and the stories fed back to us from local organisations show the real difference it's making to households across the country."

The full-time carer of a child who received a laptop through the programme said: "Thank you so much, the laptop is amazing. We downloaded Google Classroom and Ruby* did all her schoolwork. It was so fantastic to see her enjoy looking at a decent sized screen – it's been a struggle to have Ruby do homework on an old mobile phone which is past its best. To be able to help her home school on a proper laptop is wonderful."

*Ruby is not her real name

[Connecting Scotland](#) is a Scottish Government programme set up in response to COVID-19. It provides iPads, Chromebooks and support to develop skills for people who are digitally excluded and on low incomes and is delivered in partnership with SCVO, all 32 local authorities and hundreds of third sector organisations across Scotland.

Phase 1 (April – July 2020) focused on those who were at high risk of contracting coronavirus because they were in the [extremely high vulnerability group](#) ('shielding') or the [higher risk of severe illness](#) group.

Phase 2, round 1 launched on 18 August and is focused on households with children, or where a child is normally resident (this includes pregnant women with no child in the household) and care leavers up to the age of 26 (in line with eligibility for aftercare support).

The next round of phase 2 will open on 24 November and will close on 18 January at 11am. Applications can be made by organisations who support eligible groups via the [Connecting Scotland](#) website.