SCVO tackling the digital divide with money available to help from three funds

The Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) has launched the eighth round of the Digital Participation Charter Fund, the Connecting Communities Fund and The Device Refurbishment Support Fund today.

These rather grand sounding titles really mean money to help organisations and people either go online or stay online, and so promoting digital inclusion. With a world where face to face is not possible everyone relies all the more on computers, phones and technology. It is well-known that this can exclude certain people or groups.

Ivan McKee, Minister for Trade, Innovation and Public Finance, said: "We're all witnessing just how important being online is to help keep people connected, access goods and services, job hunt and find health information. I'm delighted to be able to announce funds supporting Scotland's Digital Participation Charter for 2021. Together with partners including BT, Cellnex and Edinburgh and Lothian Health Foundation we're making more than £700,000 available in small grants to support those who don't have essential digital skills, helping them gain confidence and motivation to get online, making a massive difference in their lives."

David McNeill, SCVO's Director of Development, said: "Over the last seven years the Digital Participation Charter Fund has supported 188 organisations – many in the voluntary sector – to help nearly 21,000 people get online. Supporting people to learn essential digital skills is key to tackling inequalities in Scotland – something never more needed than right now when many Scots have been forced to rely on technology to learn, work and communicate due to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic."

Sanjay Singh, Head of Funding Programmes at Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation, said: "Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation is delighted to be working in partnership with SCVO to support communities across the region who are disproportionately affected by digital exclusion. During this pandemic, we have seen a clear move to more online services to help keep people safe. It is therefore more important than ever that we help support those communities who don't currently have the technology nor the skills to access core public health services and information. Working together with SCVO and other third sector organisations across the region, we are providing vital funding through our COVID-19 Response Fund for devices and training which will help remove barriers to accessing essential health care, reduce this digital divide and keep these communities socially connected during these difficult times and beyond."

Information on all three funds can be found on SCVO's website at **https://scvo.scot/funding/digital-participation/**

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