7 Deadly Sins of Digital Exclusion

1) Inaccessible technology – the device, programme, layout are not accessible to disabled and other people. This can be cluttered websites, small font, self-service terminals that are too high up or that a wheelchair user cannot get close to, undescribed images, relying on QR codes, online forms, insecure networks without clear directions as to how to get support, 'reasonable adjustments' or real life alternatives.

2) Technical and technological language – many Londoners speak English as an additional language. Many of us are not digital natives, and even those that are have differing knowledge, emojis are culturally specific and BSL users do not have the same grammar as verbal people. TBH IRL = 🥇 . Communicate clearly, as you would meeting someone face to face for the first time.

3) Intersectionality – discrimination from different stigmatised identities creates cumulative exclusions; like being in a road traffic incident at a crossroad. Someone who is a stroke survivor, not a digital native, speaks English as a second language and is living with domestic abuse will not be able to access the protection they need by your website being WCAG 2.1 AA compliant or some 'silver surfer' training.

4) Poverty – many UK policy makers and privileged people presume that getting online is cheap to the point of free. For intersectional people this is not the case. Devices, broadband and data, paper and printing and personal assistant hours all add up. Additionally the most excluded often have to be online for longer. Public services are increasingly pushed to become digital-by-default whilst their websites/apps are labyrinths of poorly designed, inaccessible and out of date information, meaning it takes longer to find what is needed.

5) Shared Resources - many marginalised people rely on shared resources to get online at home, in the library and by using hotspots. Shared devices and accounts at home mean less time and privacy to use. When using digital technologies in public spaces we rely on staff, friends or strangers to help us out. Would you feel comfortable online banking in an internet café with the help of a waiter? Would you hand your bankcard to a stranger to access transport?

6) Poor privacy – much of what we do digitally is as an individual. If you are reliant on shared resources or 'help' to access the digital world then your right to privacy is infringed. Maintaining your data rights and knowing if your online and IRL movements can be monitored is an important part of digital inclusion. Intersectional and poorer people are less likely to insist on their confidentiality or IRL alternatives and often feel compelled to give up their data rights even when they understand the risks. Even when breaches of privacy are unlikely or rare everyone has the right to refuse to log-on, sync-up, be GPS-ed or RFID-ed, or share their email or biometrics. Online forms rarely allow you to 'prefer not to say'.

7) Risk – digital exploitation, harassment, theft and exclusion from statutory services, even those required for safeguarding, is of major concern to HEAR members. Public services duties are to provide services and protect citizens not get people 'online' or reduce staff. Without Expert by Experience involvement rather than harnessing the egalitarian potential of the digital revolution, we are embedding and exacerbating the discrimination and marginalisation that already exists.

1st steps to including us in the digital revolution

1. Expert by Experience involvement – we can design, create, code, curate, review and consult. If you want something that will work for us, ask. Did you know that before the Deaf community became the first adopters of text messaging, SMS was an add-on companies thought would go out with the pager? DYK disabled people made London transport digital? Audio and visual announcements and countdowns on bus-stops all came from disabled campaigners. DYK that Steve Jobs was a refugee or that the herstory of coding is woman's work?

2. Digital Inclusion is about more than 'skills' – it is pretty unusual to find someone in London with no experience using digital technology. Oyster cards, self-service check outs, mobile phones and on demand TV mean most have used ICT, even if they don't know it. Academia is catching up with what marginalised communities have been saying for some time; digital inclusion is about using ICT when you want, for what you want, logging off when you want, when you can create your own online world and networks.

3. Write in plain English and include an obvious glossary – the digital world is an entirely different medium to a novel, newspaper or journal. Replicating the norms of writing developed for those media does not necessarily work on ICT. On the other hand digital interactions give us the opportunity to add sounds, images, movements and journeys that print media do not. When you do write use plain English. ICT allows footnotes and definitions to appear with a wave of a cursor.

4. Capitalise your hashtags and websites – our website www.HEARequality.org.uk can be read as He Are Quality if all in lower case (a very different meaning). Capitalising your hashtags and websites means they are easier to read, say and share, and your message won't be misunderstood.

5. Digital tools are just tools – there is a drive and assumption that the only benefits of getting people online are getting them into work. In fact the biggest and best uses of digital technology are for entertainment and social interactions. If you use ICT to chat on skype, watch reality TV and share Bollywood songs why shouldn't marginalised people? The benefits of digital inclusion are far beyond the world of work.

6. Advertise people's rights and ways to IRL alternatives – public services have a duty to provide services and make 'reasonable adjustments'. Burying a phone number, complaints procedure or office opening hours deep in a website is bad for business, and for public sector providers, breaches their statutory duties.

7. When someone comes in or calls do NOT direct them to your website – in the 21st century most people will have got your phone number from your website (not the yellow pages!) If they didn't it is because they can't. Sending someone to your website is unacceptable. At the minimum offer to email someone a link to the exact page or print and send the document required. Ideally if someone has come looking for a person it is because they need a person, not a screen.

This is a working document and we want to hear your thoughts.
We are co-producing events on Digital Exclusion, please **contact mhairi@HEARequality.org.uk** for more information.

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