

Ivan McKee MSP  
Minister for Public Finance  
The Scottish Government

via email 23 May 2025

Dear Mr McKee,

Concerns regarding the lack of strategic direction on tackling digital exclusion

I am writing to raise serious concerns about the Scottish Government's current approach to tackling digital exclusion, and to formally request a meeting to discuss our position and explore a constructive way forward.

SCVO has been a committed and long-standing partner to Scottish Government in advancing digital inclusion across Scotland for over a decade. In recent years, our work in leading the delivery of the [Connecting Scotland](#) programme — which has been recognised as a world-leading response to digital exclusion during the pandemic — is a testament to our dedication and demonstrates the impact that focused national effort and effective partnership working can achieve.

It is therefore with considerable regret that I must express our deep concern at the lack of meaningful progress following the publication of [Audit Scotland's report on tackling digital inclusion](#) in August 2024. Despite the Scottish Parliament's Public Audit Committee [endorsing its recommendations](#), we are now several months on with no substantive response from the Scottish Government. With deadlines for some key recommendations having past at the end of March, this inaction is increasingly difficult to justify.

We are particularly troubled by the absence of a clear strategy or timeline for action. The proposed Digital Inclusion Alliance, which appears to be the main strand of activity, has been in development for several years. We believe that its current trajectory is fundamentally flawed. The approach risks introducing unnecessary bureaucracy, misrepresents the realities of the digital inclusion landscape, and is overly reliant on private sector involvement without clear evidence of genuine commitment or investment.

We know these concerns are shared by many organisations across the public, private and voluntary sectors who may be reluctant to publicly challenge the Scottish Government.

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After extensive internal reflection and engagement with our board and senior leadership team, SCVO has taken the difficult decision not to support the development of the Digital Inclusion Alliance in its current form. Consequently, we chose to not submit a grant funding proposal for 2025/26 to the Digital Citizen Division. While this decision has significant financial implications for us, we cannot, in good conscience, continue to lend implicit support to an approach that we believe undermines our partnership and the progress made over the past ten years.

Nevertheless, our commitment to digital inclusion remains resolute. We are honouring all our responsibilities relating to the closure of the legacy Connecting Scotland programme by March 2026. We are also working with other areas of Government to deliver specific activity – including continuing delivery of [Digital Lifelines](#) with the support of the Drugs Policy Unit, with recent evaluation showing the life-changing impact tackling digital exclusion can have for some of the most vulnerable people in society. We remain keen to contribute to a more effective and coherent national strategy across national and local government, the voluntary sector and the private sector.

We have raised our concerns with officials, but we would now welcome the opportunity to meet with you at your earliest convenience to discuss our concerns in more detail and explore how we might work together to secure a more impactful approach to digital inclusion in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Fowlie  
Chief Executive



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