Connections For All - Digital Inclusion/Exclusion

Campaign issue 180, January’s newsletter of the National Pensioners Convention (NPC), reported the NPC’s webinar held to commemorate Dignity Action Day on February 1st this year where it was revealed - ‘beating digital poverty could save thousands of lives and transform millions more if we act now’. Participants in the webinar heard how moving older adults out of digital poverty could save 18,000 to 24,000 lives through better health literacy. It would also reduce in-patient cases by 2,000-3,000 a year, substantially reduce isolation among older people, and save billions of pounds, according to research by the Digital Poverty Alliance (DPA) and Deloitte.

DPA chief executive officer Elizabeth Anderson outlined the findings in a briefing for the webinar, which is part of the NPC’s ‘Connections For All’ campaign. The Alliance is bringing together organisations from the private and public sector, like NPC to campaign to end digital poverty—which affects 13-19 million people over the age of 16. But worst affected are older people with the research estimating that 1 in 2 are in digital poverty, and 1 in 5 are in severe digital poverty—in other words they have no laptop or smartphone, no internet access, and no skills to go online. In a society moving at speed to digital-first and digital-only— including everything from your bank to your GP, and your energy provider to your supermarket, millions are being left behind and unable to use essential services.

Elizabeth Anderson said: “Digital access is no longer a luxury—it is a basic necessity. That is why DPA is campaigning to end digital poverty by 2030.” DPA is looking to the government, the tech industry and network providers to help tackle the issues. But like the NPC, DPA acknowledges that digital accessibility should be a choice, and that not everyone will want to, or even be capable or going online, so alternatives are essential.

NPC General Secretary Jan Shortt, who chaired the session, welcomed Elizabeth’s presentation and pledged that we will work closely with DPA towards ending digital exclusion. Violet Rook of NPC Digital Working Party outlined our work in highlighting issues and informing members on news and advice. Further information can be found at www.npcuk.org/post/connections-for-all-2024

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