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## Event highlights digital inclusion for learning disability community

Folk with learning disabilities are showcasing the digital devices which benefit their lives at a week-long public event in Aberdeen city centre.

Scottish Learning Disability Week is being marked this week (6-10 May), with service providers and the people they assist taking space in Aberdeen City Vaccination Centre to display some of the new technologies which help with day-to-day living.

They are setting out their stalls each day –10am-2pm Mon-Fri – at the Bon Accord Centre venue to demonstrate the connective benefits of new tech.

At the event are Bon Accord Care, Aberdeen Digital Hub, the Aberdeen City Council-based Technology Enabled Care (TEC) team, and third sector organisations Community Integrated Care, Affinity Trust, Specialist Resource Solutions, Create Aberdeen, Enable Scotland and Advocacy Service Aberdeen – along with Aberdeen City Health & Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP) care management staff.

Learning disability clients who have benefited from a range of devices are on hand each day to show what they are using.

Katharine Paton, ACHSCP Adult Learning Disabilities service manager, said: “The theme of this year’s Learning Disability Week is digital inclusion so we thought this would be an ideal opportunity show off the great work that is happening across Aberdeen.

“This is the perfect chance for citizens to find out what technology can offer people who can often feel isolated and what it can do to keep them safe –and stay in touch with friends, family, loved-ones and the professionals who help them in their lives.

“The service providers deserve a big thank-you for taking the time to promote the message to the general public – and our vulnerable clients should be praised for being there in person at the vaccination centre to tell their own stories.”

Aberdeen Integration Joint Board chair Councillor John Cooke said: “The recent Covid-19 pandemic placed a huge strain on our learning disability services teams as they strove to maintain care for clients during long periods of enforced isolation. The pandemic also placed

extra pressures on the people who receive our services and their families, who had to get used to services being provided in different ways.

“Our creative staff and service providers rose to occasion magnificently to keep people safely connected – and, with partners, they ensured continuity of care, not least by embracing new technologies to remain in contact with their service-users and helped them in turn to keep in touch within their own networks.”

Support during the pandemic included creating a “virtual timetable” of social activities and opportunities to stay connected online on ipads to ensure that supported people and families could still see their friends, take advantage of learning opportunities, and contact support staff.

Learning Disability Week at the vaccination centre includes specially produced storyboards capturing individuals’ journeys with some of the new technologies which have recently come on stream and how they have developed new skills, confidence and connections by using them.

There are videos of service-users using some of the devices, along with speech bubbles and other visual aids celebrating people’s experiences.

Several providers are showcasing the platforms they use to help those they support to be included in their support planning. Also on display are devices which help with safety.

Part of the vaccination centre has been turned into “a room in your hoose” to demonstrate how gadgets can support independence in the home.

Members of the public are welcome to drop in during the week to find out more about how the learning disability community is getting more and more connected.

**ENDS**