



Jisc

Digital wellbeing for you, your colleagues and learners

Guidance for practitioners

What is digital wellbeing?

Digital wellbeing:
The impact of technologies and digital services on people's mental, physical and emotional health.

Digital wellbeing is one of the elements in our **digital capabilities framework**¹. It is a term used to describe the impact of technologies and digital services on people's mental, physical, social and emotional health. It is a complex concept that can be viewed from a variety of perspectives and across different contexts and situations.



Individual perspective – personal, learning and work contexts:

this involves identifying and understanding the positive benefits and any potential negative aspects of engaging with digital activities and being aware of ways to manage and control these to improve wellbeing.



Societal or organisational perspective:

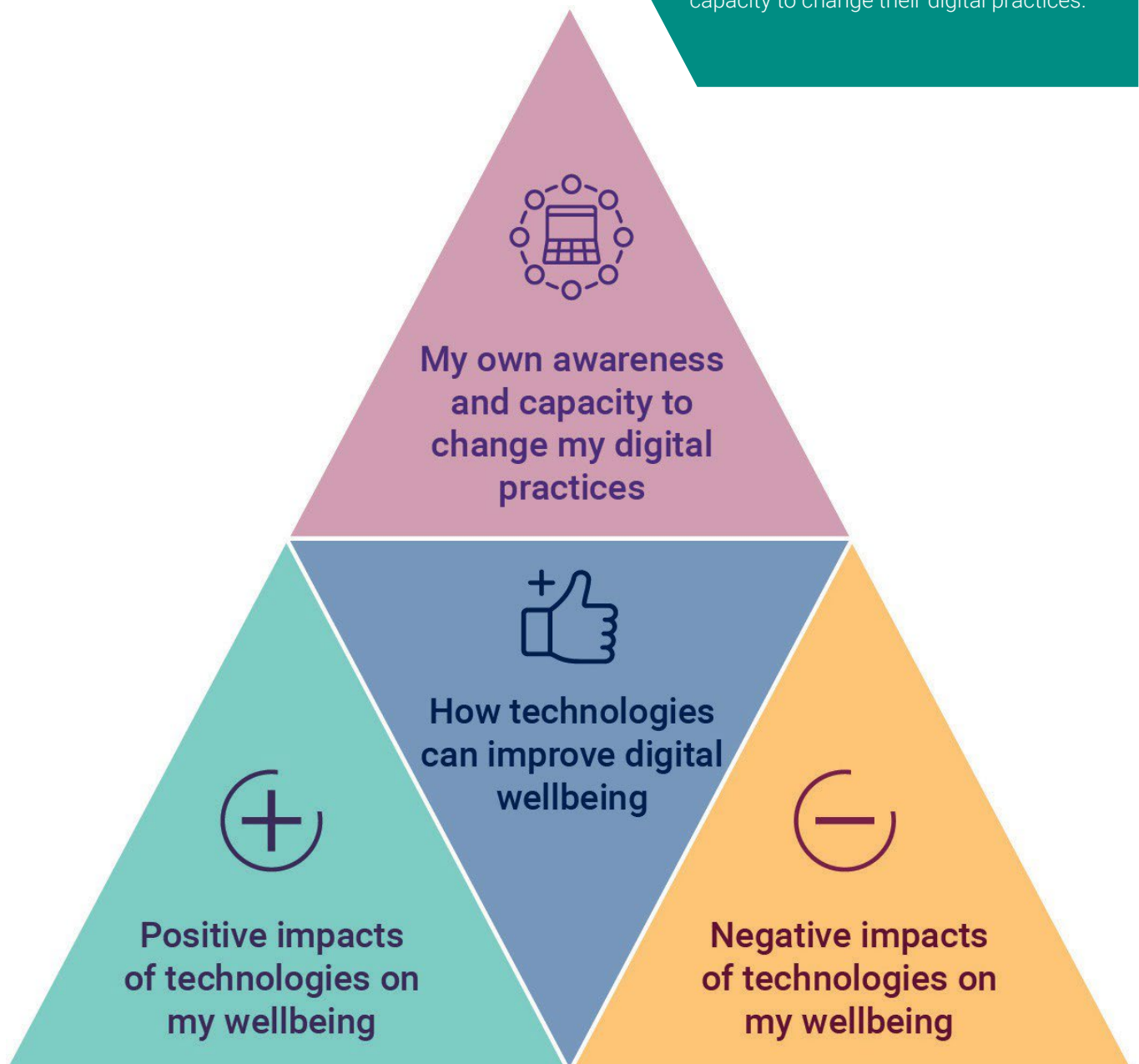
providers of digital systems, services and content have a responsibility for ensuring that these are well managed, supported, accessible and equitable. They also need to empower and build capability in users so that all who engage with them are equipped to do so in a way that supports and/or improves their wellbeing.

Although it is important for individuals to take control of their digital wellbeing, they may not always have the opportunity or the ability to manage the impact of technologies or digital services on their lives. For example, in employment contexts where staff may not be able to make changes or in personal contexts where individuals may not have access to, or be included in, digital opportunities that could have a positive effect on their lives. It is also important to remember that individuals may not have the support or capacity to counteract negative effects of technologies.

¹Jisc digital capabilities framework. Available online at digitalcapability.jisc.ac.uk/what-is-digital-capability

Our model shows four aspects of individual digital wellbeing

At the bottom of the model there are two triangles that represent the potential positive and negative impacts of technology on wellbeing. The middle triangle focuses on the potential for technologies to improve wellbeing and top triangle emphasises that individuals need both awareness and capacity to change their digital practices.



Different aspects of digital wellbeing

Technologies and digital activities can impact on physical, mental, social and emotional wellbeing in both positive and negative ways. How far these might affect an individual depends on their personal context, circumstances and capacity to deal with – or take advantage of these impacts. Digital wellbeing can be considered in these four contexts: social, personal, learning and work.

Overlapping contexts

While it can be helpful to focus on digital wellbeing within specific contexts, it is important to consider the ways in which these overlap. Providers are increasingly focusing on learner personal and mental wellbeing which does include elements of digital wellbeing, such as the potential negative impacts of social media. People may have more control over their digital wellbeing in personal and social contexts than they do in a learning or a work context, but only if they have the knowledge, capacity and appropriate support to do so.

Potential impacts of digital tools and practices/activities

In all contexts there are positive and negative potential impacts of interacting with digital tools, services, content and activities:



Digital social wellbeing

How you interact with others online and how this impacts your wellbeing

+ Positives

- Preventing isolation
- Building and maintaining relationships
- Reducing loneliness
- Full participation and connection with family, friends and wider communities
- Increased opportunities for inclusion
- Online support groups

- Negatives

- Cyberbullying
- Online grooming
- Radicalisation
- Exclusion and/or accessibility (eg gender, age, poverty)
- Unrealistic social expectations and potential for peer pressure
- Negative comparisons with others



Digital personal wellbeing

How your digital activity impacts your personal life

+ Positives

- Creating a positive identity
- Building self worth
- Enjoyment (eg games, fun interactions, music)
- Convenience/time saving (eg shopping)
- Access to new information/ ideas/inspiration
- Tools for physical, mental and emotional health
- Wearables promoting physical activity (eg smart watches)
- Access to local services
- Access to money saving goods and services

- Negatives

- Addictive online behaviours (eg gambling, porn, checking devices)
- Passive consumption
- Access to illegal activities/ materials
- Personal data breaches
- Lack of access and/ or being left behind
- Lack of sleep
- Impact on physical health (eg eye strain, posture, lack of exercise)
- Phishing scams
- Can negatively impact self-image





Digital learning wellbeing

How you interact with digital for your personal and professional learning and development and how this impacts your wellbeing



Positives

- Alternative ways to learn
- Online collaborative learning opportunities
Engaging learning activities
- Practice digital skills for employment
- Learn digital skills for new careers/career development
- Increased access to learning (eg online learning, access to assistive technologies and software)
- More engaging assessment and feedback
- Preparing for the digital skills of the future/
emerging technologies



Negatives

- Lack of digital skills
- Digital overload
- Negative impact of compulsory online collaboration
- Time learning new technologies not the subject
Inappropriate use of technologies
- Lack of choice (eg told which technologies to use)
- Digital divide



Digital work wellbeing

How you use digital within your working environment and how this impacts your wellbeing



Positives

- Improved communication
Global collaboration
Flexible working
Tools to manage workload
- Tools to manage workload; efficiency, productivity, organisation
- Creating positive online professional identity
- Links to other professionals/
subject networks
- Supports independent problem-solving/
resilient working practices
- Access to digital information and resources to support with work



Negatives

- Digital overload
- Always on (24 hour access)
- Changes to job roles/activities
- Automation of tasks (eg redundancy)
- Poor ergonomics



Managing your own digital wellbeing

- positive actions for individuals

Education providers have a duty of care to make sure their employees and learners have a safe, legally compliant and supportive digital environment to work and learn in. Additionally, individuals have responsibility for aspects within their control and should take appropriate steps to ensure they achieve and maintain a positive approach to digital wellbeing.



Access and use appropriate training and guidance for digital systems and tools relevant to your learning and role. Ask for training and support if there are gaps in the support that your organisation provides



Take time to explore and understand your own digital preferences and needs, considering how technologies can support your accessibility requirements. Take advantage of adjustable features within accessibility software and assistive technologies



Consider the impact of digital activities on your own and others' health. Take steps to reduce negative impacts by:

- Observing good posture, taking regular screen breaks, adjusting monitor brightness, using online tools for sleep tracking and using a blue light filter to reduce eye strain and improve sleep quality
- Recognise and manage addictive online behaviours
- Recognise negative online behaviour and know the appropriate channels to report this (likely to be referenced in your IT and acceptable use policy or the platform's policy)
- Use security features like passwords, two-step authentication processes and password managers
- Be security conscious (e.g. saving files to the cloud and be mindful of your use of digital tools in public settings)
- Report technical and workspace issues back through appropriate channels (eg managers, IT services, learning resource staff and learner welfare services)
- Take a proactive role in identifying potential challenges and sharing good practice if you can



Manage digital workload (eg notifications, tasks, online meetings). Although technology can help to improve efficiency it can create unrealistic expectations that support will be available 24:7, which can cause stress. Learn how to use digital tools more effectively and familiarise yourself with techniques and approaches that can help you to manage digital communications and avoid distractions.

Note: while individuals can attempt to manage their digital workload, it is not solely within their control. Managers should consider the impact of digital workload within online meetings, staff appraisals, performance management and continuing professional development (CPD) activities



Make sure you can access and use digital equipment, tools, services and content safely.

This will help to maintain your physical and mental health. This could include making sure that your work and study environments are ergonomically designed and comply with health and safety requirements. Safe use also includes making sure that digital interactions don't have a negative impact on mental health. Learners and staff should be aware of organisational guidelines about safe use and diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) policies



Create and manage a positive digital identity (professional and personal).

Individuals should determine their own visibility online. All learners and staff need to be aware of their digital footprint and how their online activities, and those of others, can affect this. Consider what you share online and whether it is making a positive contribution



Ensure that any services, content and systems that you provide or develop are accessible and inclusive. Your provider will be working towards compliance

with UK government regulations for the accessibility of online content. There are also broader considerations that can significantly impact individual digital wellbeing. Staff should be aware of these and be working towards improving diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI)

Good practice principles to support the digital wellbeing of others

Some staff have a direct responsibility for aspects of learner and staff digital wellbeing but it may not always be obvious to others when and how they too could provide support. Some learners may also have a formal or informal role to play here (eg digital champions). These good practice principles highlight areas where staff could help learners to:



Know how to effectively access and use the digital content, systems and tools that your organisation provides



Safely use digital equipment, tools, services and content to maintain physical and mental health (eg observe good posture, follow guidelines and safety regulations, take screen breaks, adjust monitor brightness)



Be able to choose the most appropriate technologies for learning or for specific tasks



Be security conscious, using secure passwords, two-step authentication processes and password managers



Access and use appropriate support and guidance



Develop digital capabilities and skills to support their digital wellbeing (eg information, media, financial, data literacies)



Recognise their own digital learning preferences and needs



Create and manage positive digital identities personally and in preparation for life and work



Manage digital workload and learning (eg planning and preparation, avoiding distraction)



Participate in appropriate communities (eg personal, political, social, educational, professional networks)



There are many things that individuals can do to improve their digital wellbeing. The challenges lie in being aware of how much the digital tools, services, content and systems are impacting on our wellbeing and, more importantly, in recognising how we can manage or control this.



Learners and staff need processes to give feedback about issues affecting digital wellbeing that are outside their control.



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