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|  | Speak Up-KōrerotiaDigital exclusion16 December 2020 |
| Female | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s access media station Plains FM and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
| Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Ko “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” tēnei, ko Sally Carlton ahau. Today we’re talking about digital inclusion and its counterpoint, digital exclusion. Basically this means somebody’s ability - or not, as the case may be - to access and effectively use information and communication technologies, most specifically the internet. If we think about the internet today, it’s a powerful means of enabling connectivity and participation, it’s a means of access to information and a means of freedom of expression. Recognising this fact, in 2016, the United Nations declared access to the internet as a human right, and correspondingly amended Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which is the article relating to freedom of expression and opinion to incorporate reference to the internet.This right has also been recognised at home. The New Zealand government has recognised the importance of internet access for social equality, and in 2019 released a report called *The Digital Inclusion Blueprint Te Mahere mō te Whakaurunga Matihiko*, which sets out a plan of how the government intends to support Aotearoa New Zealand towards digital inclusion. The report’s introduction notes the internet has become part of the fabric of everyday life for most New Zealanders but also that as more key services move online, people who can’t access or use the internet are increasingly missing out. So it’s this idea of missing out that we’re going to be thinking about today. And this missing out might be things like not being able to easily apply for jobs or keep up with people who connect via social media. So interestingly, just a few months after the government released its blueprint, the Citizens Advice Bureau released a report called *Face-to-Face with Digital Exclusion* which looks at the impacts that digital public services are having on some of the people who are missing out. Sacha Green who authored this report is one of the guests today, along with Niki Davis, Professor Emerita at UC, Kim Slack and Shanelle Temaru-Ilalio from the Christchurch City Libraries. I’m really looking forward to the conversation today, I think you’re all going to bring a variety of perspectives and we’ll hopefully get a little bit of a grip on what we’re talking about. Sacha, perhaps we’ll start with you. If you could introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about the work you’ve recently been involved in, please.  |
| Sacha | Sure thing, Sally. Kia ora koutou, ko Sacha Green tōku ingoa. Hi everyone, my name is Sacha Green. I’m based in Wellington and work for the Citizens Advice Bureau New Zealand. My role there at the national office is National Advisor, Legal and Strategic. I’m involved in a range of work at the CAB but at the heart of it, what I’m driven by is supporting people to have access to justice and to be empowered as well as advocating for positive social change. Over the last few years a key area of focus of my work has been looking at the challenges faced by CAB clients who are impacted by digital exclusion, particularly in relation to accessing public services. This issue was something that we were increasingly seeing coming through in our client enquiries and it led to analysis of over 4,000 enquiries where digital exclusion issues were identified and the resulting report that you’ve mentioned, Sally.  |
| Sally | Great, I’m sure we will talk more about that report as we continue.  |
| Sacha | Cool.  |
| Sally | Kim and Shanelle? |
| Kim | Kia ora. My name is Kim Slack and I work for Christchurch City Libraries. Part of my role is a Learning Specialist and under that umbrella is looking at programmes for community around how to use technology. And what we have found that a lot of our programmes that we offer during the day attract older people and I think some of the conversations that we’ll have this morning will be around that digital divide and access issue that people who are older have regarding technologies. So the Libraries offer services and support to customers on how to use technologies.  |
| Shanelle | Kia orana, my name is Shanelle Temaru-Ilalio, I am the team leader of Programme Design and Delivery. So I lead a team of Learning Specialists, the majority of my team are teachers. So we’re involved in the programming that Kim is speaking of.  |
| Sally | And Niki, our final guest.  |
| Niki | Ko Niki Davis tōku ingoa. Nō Aerani ahau. Kia ora everybody, my name is Niki Davis. I grew up in the UK and Christchurch is now my home. I came here in 2008 to become a Professor of eLearning with the University of Canterbury and I founded the eLearning Research Lab at that time. But my passion since I became a teacher, decades ago, has been digital equity and that means a role for every teacher and therefore teachers play and important part in our digital inclusion for everybody. Although I retired a year ago, I continue to support research and service in this area and that includes as a board member of Greater Christchurch Schools Network which has that equity mission for schools.  |
| Sally | I think it’s going to be an important element talking about schools and the role that they can be play. OK, if we’re going to kickstart this conversation then, we’ve been talking about digital exclusion but also digital inclusion. So why is it that we want to strive for digital inclusion? What are the benefits?  |
| Sacha | I can kick off if you like. So digital inclusion is really about the ability to participate in society - with more and more of our daily processes and access to information and services shifting to an online forum, the ability to interact in that environment has become fairly essential for people in terms of being able to actually connect with others, to access services. And in our space at the CAB, it’s also the impact it has on things like accessing knowledge about your rights and entitlements, being able to connect in with public services and I think… You know, it has a real impact on people’s wellbeing if they aren’t able to connect. Obviously some things I’d like to talk about a bit later around whether or not digital inclusion is the only thing we should be striving for anyway, but yeah, I do think it’s about participation and a recognition that is the way the world is going.  |
| Niki | I think it’s also important to raise the fact that it’s not just about technology, far from it. It’s about relationship and that digital inclusion is about today’s literacy and it’s very hard to participate fully in society -no matter what age you are - unless you are fully literate.  |
| Sally | We’re talking about the benefits that can be gained if you are able to access the internet but obviously there are barriers to the equitable access to the internet. So who is it who is most likely to be unable to enjoy the benefits, who is most digitally excluded? |
| Sacha | It’s a really interesting issue because I think there is an assumption that it is primarily older people. I think that’s definitely a factor, just in terms of lack of familiarity with new digital technologies. But what we found when we did our research into the clients at least that come to us at the CAB, was that interestingly barriers to engaging online were experienced across age groups. You know, youth on its own was not a guarantee of digital confidence, competence or ability to access and so we saw young people experiencing digital exclusion as well as older people. We certainly saw Māori and Pasifika peoples highly overrepresented in those who were struggling because of the shift to things being online.And then there’s a range of other issues around literacy, confidence, engaging online, disability issues, language barriers and actually I think the broader context of social inequality is then reflected in what that looks like in a digital environment. So factors such as poverty are considerable in the experience of those who are digitally excluded.  |
| Niki | I’d agree with that from our research with Greater Christchurch Schools Network. We did a post-Covid survey - which we might come back to - but that and the Connected Aranui project, which is one of the least favoured regions in this…well this country actually, trying to help people get connected is far from easy. And so digital exclusion is a very complex thing. And possibly at the other end in terms of wellness, if you connect badly, you can do yourself some harm and you can do your kids some harm. So if you don’t know enough about it, then for example you may not know that children under two should have almost no access unless for some reason they choose to explore it in a very highly supported way.  |
| Kim | I would agree with both of your comments. I understand from Libraries that because we have free internet access, it’s often used but how it is used is sometimes what causes more issues. And having access to the internet is just the tip of the iceberg in a way because we need to support people in how to use the internet and have that better understanding of what that connectivity is and how it can support learning and wellbeing.  |
| Shanelle | Tautoko with what Sacha had said. There’s one in four Māori and Pasifika children that suffer material hardship. So material hardship is defined as… well I guess what our normal society sees as essential so that’s that internet access, that’s that device access. So there is a real divide there and it does… some of it is coming back to poverty and what people can actually afford and what they see as essential for that.  |
| Sacha | And I just want to add there too, one of the really significant things that we’ve come to in our research at the Citizens Advice Bureau is this question of you know, what is it that people need? Our focus has been on the ability to access public services, so benefit entitlements, paying your taxes, access to information, passports, immigration, all those sorts of things. If we’re seeking to meet people’s needs, our feeling is that we need to step back and look at inclusion from a broader perspective and not always jump to a digital solution for things. So yes, digital is the way the world is going but it won’t always be the right thing for every person in every situation and I think there’s a real challenge to look at how we ensure inclusion with digital as part of that picture but not with it taking over the whole picture of how we anticipate delivering services into the future.  |
| Kim | Just bringing it back in regards to that whole relationship stuff as well. What we did notice through Libraries during the lockdown was that there was a real want for people to stay connected in whatever capacity that was. So yes having access to be able to do your banking, be able to do your online shopping during Covid – that was definitely one of the things. But what we found at Christchurch City Libraries was that people were wanting to create Zoom accounts so that they could stay connected with their families, so that they could still have that ability to be able to see each other and interact.  |
| Sally | I know one of the stories I heard about Covid and the Libraries was that people who maybe don’t have… either don’t have connectivity or not high quality internet connectivity at home, would come to the Libraries and use the Libraries’ internet on a normal basis but obviously, if you’re not supposed to be leaving your house and going further afield, not being able to sit outside the library and use the free wi-fi was then impacting people’s ability to connect.  |
| Shanelle | Yes definitely and we noticed a huge, huge jump in the request for access to Skinny Jump during time. So there were lots of people that were actually realising at that point, oh I want to be connected.  |
| Sally | I think what’s worrying about you guys are all saying is that the groups who are more vulnerable or disadvantaged traditionally are also more vulnerable and disadvantaged digitally and so what is happening as the world moves increasingly more into the digital realm, those groups that are already marginalised will become increasingly more so.  |
| Sacha | Absolutely and the real concern there too is that the focus on digital processes is meaning that those people are kind of becoming invisible. If you think about the Census debacle where it was about moving to online and the very people who are most vulnerable, were those who weren’t being captured because that process of participating in the Census was less accessible to them. So there’s a real risk that we then don’t see those people because they’re not participating online.  |
| Sally | And also we don’t see their needs.  |
| Sacha | That’s right.  |
| Sally | If they can’t have a place to record them.  |
| Sacha | Yes exactly.  |
| Sally | So just finally, then, as we end this segment. In the government’s *Digital Inclusion Blueprint*, they mentioned that in order for someone to experience digital inclusion, there are four key things that are needed and they target motivation, access, having the skills and having the trust in the online world. Any comment that you have to those four points there? |
| Niki | Just one. It sounds very individual but in fact for that access, it’s got to be a community. So when you get communities like whānau, like hapū, something wider than that and the whole community excluded, then the lack of access is… oh it’s so much bigger.  |
| Sacha | I’ve had a look at some of the research the government has done itself looking at existing digital exclusion programmes and there’s very much a focus on access and skills which is, you know, understandable because those are tangible things. It can be about trying to set up free wi-fi in spaces and teach digital competencies through courses and other things. But there’s very little that is around motivation and trust and I think that it’s an interesting one because a lot of the people we see are facing all those barriers and what might be framed as a lack of motivation to get online, in some cases is also about a preference – a desire to be able to connect with people in-person or in other ways. So I think there’s a challenge there around ticking all those boxes but also recognising that there’s element of society where there is always going to be a struggle to… not to access but to make use of digital technologies and that we need to be ensuring as we move forward, that we are meeting the need of all people and not just leaving some people behind.  |
| Kim | You mentioned motivation and I think that that rings bells for me in the way that sometimes people are pushed into technology and I think that that has happened with great speed and with really no consultation regarding services moving online and I think that often the motivation maybe a false… what’s the word… false approach because it is misleading. I think you either connect online or you don’t have the service and that’s what I think the real issue of the exclusion with digital divide is, really.  |
| Sacha | Yes, that’s something we certainly heard coming through from our clients was that choice was being taken away from them.  |
| Kim | Definitely and often families, don’t they, have devices that they give to family members and that’s where the frustration starts because they’re unsupported and not sure really where the motivation is going to come from.  |
| Sally | We might have our first song which was Niki’s choice. If you’d like to tell us very briefly why you chose it.  |
| Niki | Well I asked the whole research team what they thought and they thought this one because it was a young person who came from a Pacific background, who had made great use of the technology and a way of celebrating that. And actually, if you look at the video that goes with it - because these days, music is multimedia, really - I saw lots of different people and different ages represented and the joy that came from that.  |
| Sally | So here is Josh Stylah with ‘Laxed’. |
|  | **MUSIC BY JOSH STYLAH – LAXED** |
| Sally  | This is “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” and we’re talking about digital exclusion today. I’d like to think about now some of the real-life impacts and stories that you’re hearing from your research and from your work, about people who are experiencing digital exclusion and some of the ways in which this is making them feel left behind.  |
| Kim | I’ve been in my current role for ten years and I’ve seen technology change a lot in that time. My background is Libraries and also teaching adults and children - and technology, when I first came to this role, was really around supporting the use. And now it’s still that but it’s more than that, it’s teaching about safety and access and all of the terminology that goes with that. Lots of really good stories, mainly for people just having the confidence. So coming in with really no confidence at all and feeling that they have no ability on learning technology but just having the environment that’s supportive and relaxed has really helped people either connect with family or it’s given them access to use internet in a way that supports their everyday life.  |
| Sally | I think that probably comes back to that element of trust that was identified as an important means of accessing. Because if you can talk with somebody face to face, they can walk you through the processes and talk to you about safety, that’s really important, that’s going to help people trust the big scary world of the digital realm, I think.  |
| Kim | From my work, I’ve discovered that often it’s the passwords which I know that we feel that it’s just something we have to do and create. But the overwhelmingness of accessing sites and having an account online is really what is the barrier. So I think people find password creation - accessing even an email account in the first place to be able to have an account - has been a real barrier. But having a safe environment, and Libraries create that space and have programmes that do support and engage with different areas of our community.  |
| Shanelle | Tautoko with what Kim said, we’ve definitely got programmes. We have Better Digital Futures that is working towards our 65+. We are looking at a programme with Digital Futures Aotearoa where it’s Recycle a Device, because it’s all good to be able to teach the people how to use the internet and how to do your online shopping but what we’ve noticed is that people are coming in and they’re learning these skills but then they’re going home and they actually don’t have a device to be actually be able to connect and do the stuff. So it’s one thing to learn but it’s also that accessibility to actually have the device.  |
| Niki | Seems to me that we also are to recognise that these online services and environments, the digital world is not really being designed for everybody. Some of what we need to teach is because of that and it’s also because of, if you like the bad behaviour. And so learning about the new culture and helping people to become responsible can reduce, if you like, the motivation.  |
| Shanelle | And anxiety.  |
| Niki | And anxiety. But we’re talking about the people. But how much are the services engaging in that and the designers? I think we need more people to engage in very different roles which need to become much more of a partnership.  |
| Shanelle | I think in support of what Kim was saying about that the internet can be quite scary, I’ve come from a background of 13 years in police and the amount of reports that we had from elderly people being scammed. So there is that whole education around the safety as well that’s super, super important. Not just for our elderly but for our people across the board.  |
| Sacha  | And in terms of impact on individuals, I guess what we see at the CAB is people are often coming to us because they have questions about their rights or responsibilities or it maybe that they are trying to access other services and in terms of digital exclusion, you know, for many of these people that’s resulting in feelings of social isolation, of frustration. It can put people under really significant stress if they are unable to proceed in a process. These can be about significant things in people’s lives, you know, immigration was a big one where the immigration service systematically closed all its public counters across New Zealand and then proceeded to stop printing any paper copies of forms. So there was a significant number of people who still need a paper based service and were coming to the CAB then to get printed copies and I think we worked out that we were printing about 400,000 pages of immigration forms in a year. But you know, it can be all manner of things. It might be someone trying to register their child’s birth or in another process where they have to pay online and have no debit or credit card. For other people it’s the access issues, for people who don’t have a computer at home, don’t have reliable internet access but there’s all those other barriers we talked about as well. In terms of that issue of service design, I guess our experience particularly around public services is that there’s very much this driver towards digital transformation and the focus has become digital service design rather than service design that meets the needs of people. So one of our really clear things that we are wanting to see is public services being designed in a way that they’re accessible to everyone. That might be recognising that we are shifting more to a digital environment but making sure that there are offline channels for people who need them and pathways through so that they’re not facing barriers to getting their entitlements and to fulfilling their obligations. We had someone come to us who was really distressed because he had received a letter telling him that if he didn’t pay a tax debt in a certain amount of time, court action was going to be taken against him and he hadn’t got any of the communication because it had been sent through MyIR and he didn’t have the ability or confidence to get online and find that out. So it was a real moment of stress for him.  |
| Sally | Have you noticed many impacts since the lockdown in terms of the ways people are experiencing digital inclusion/exclusion? We talked about maybe people having a bit more motivation in terms of wanting to set up Zoom accounts and that kind of connectivity, but have you seen any other impacts?  |
| Kim | With Libraries, we have formed a partnership with Better Digital Futures which has been funded through the Office for Seniors and we rolled that out after lockdown and the uptake has been great across Libraries and it’s a service that is a free service for people over 65 and some module type approach. Each pathway or module is two hours and an introductory and then there’s digital essentials and engagement and safety. So each of these modules are delivered from Libraries and so far we’ve had success with uptake and I think a lot of that has come from some of the conversation we’ve had but the need to connect or learn or have some support and the plan is to continue for the next two yeas with this initiative.  |
| Niki | That’s really interesting. We had a Greater Christchurch Schools Network survey just as the lockdown stopped, the lockdown Level 4. So schools had been online for a short amount of time and like other parts of the world, they’d been prompted to focus on the wellbeing of their people and the government had attempted to roll out all sorts of equipment and Skinny Jump modems and things like that. But it had all been done in such a hurry that we shouldn’t take it as a real test of the situation, it was a test under trying circumstances and the teachers were amazing in the way they stood up and did so much. But what it showed us quite clearly was that these young people were happy to learn online in many cases, that parents could have a greater role in the education as could children, young people especially and that some of them got very stressed by it. So our education system can be stressing, they’ve got targets to achieve and that there was a significant percentage and of course we didn’t catch them all because our survey was online. But it was through the schools with a high uptake and schools found their individual reports really useful in planning for the future. So we can expect schools will want to do more with the technology but we can also expect that families can continue… to find food is actually more important than technology - no surprise there - and so there will be these equitable issues that we need to continue to engage with and we need to find models. We learned a lot with the Connected Aranui project but we’ve got to find more ways to help parents get online and engage in their children’s education, if it is to be part, as it will be of education today because it is part of literacy and it is part of growing up and becoming an adult.  |
| Sacha | Interesting the comment then about feeding your family probably sitting as a higher priority than access to technology. The CAB service continued throughout lockdown and we received a lot of calls through that time and one of the highest categories of enquiry from people who were also identified as being digitally excluded, was access to food assistance. So you can see how the impacts for those who are already struggling are exacerbated when you shift to a digital only environment and for some of those people, it was as simple as the fact that they needed to be able to call an 0800 number to find out where their local foodbank was or to get the contact details of their local foodbank.In other situations, it was people were grappling with access to information. So I think during Covid lockdown period there was amazing communication happening from the government and we had really good constant updates of information online. But for some people, getting to that information was very difficult so we saw a huge spike in our enquiries about employment issues as you can understand. There were lots of people who wanted access to the information about what their rights were and there was a lot of information sitting there but it’s just that challenge when there’s a barrier to actually accessing that information and then you also have the question of understanding the information. And that’s where we think, you know, it’s really important to always look at how we have a human component alongside whatever is happening online. Rather than seeing online as the be all and end all.  |
| Sally  | Sacha, when you mentioned that 0800 number people needed to call, are you then implying that the 0800 number or finding that 0800 number was then online, was that why people couldn’t access it?  |
| Sacha | No sorry they were calling the CAB’s 0800 number because they knew it or could access it or had information about it at home. But what they were trying to do was potentially call their local foodbank which wasn’t a freephone number and they didn’t have credit, it was the ability to access something that was free or to then find a phone number even. Because you know, you’re right, basically in terms a phone directory, we are mostly reliant now on looking those things up online.  |
| Sally | That’s what I thought maybe you meant there, was the number was online - and if you can’t get online, you can’t find the number.  |
| Sacha | Yes, exactly.  |
| Shanelle | That’s kind of the same for the different programmes for digital literacy that are around. How do we get them to the people that actually aren’t online because we’re advertising this stuff online but people aren’t online. So yes, it’s sort of like how do we tap into that? How do we reach the people that we need to to say “Hey, this is here”?  |
| Sally | This is the perfect opportunity to have our second song and then we’ll jump in with what do we do about this issue of digital exclusion? So Sacha you have chosen a song for us which is… ‘Pro Bono Techno Zone’ by New Zealand artist Estère, that sounds pretty exciting.  |
| Sacha | It’s a pretty funky track and it’s really about… well, my take on it is it’s partly looking at how we are connected to technology but that in some situations “we are a slave to technology” is one of the lines. So I really liken it is to what we thought was free, isn’t free at all.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY ESTERE – PRO BONO TECHNO ZONE** |
| Sally  | Today on “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia” we’re talking about digital exclusion with Sacha Green from Citizens Advice Bureau, Niki Davis, Professor Emerita at the University of Canterbury and Kim Slack and Shanelle Temaru-Ilalio from the Christchurch City Libraries. In this final segment I’d like to think about what is it we should be doing to try and improve digital inclusion and thus minimise digital exclusion. We’ve obviously touched on some of these ideas throughout, but what would be on your wish list?  |
| Sacha | You know as I’ve mentioned, CAB, this has been a real focus area for us over the last wee while and you know, looking into the issue led to us putting together our report *Face to face with digital exclusion* which was an analysis of over 4,000 client enquiries where digital exclusion was experienced. And I just had a quick look now and we’re up to 14,000 clients now who we have recorded who are experiencing digital exclusion. In our report, we put forward a whole bunch of recommendations about what we feel needs to happen and that has also led us in more recent times to start a campaign which is called ‘Leave no one behind: Campaign to address digital exclusion’ and we put together a petition which is on Action Station for those who are online. But we also have paper copies which you know, of course in the context of this issue, has been really, really important, and interestingly, about 50% of the petition signatures were received so far have been on paper. So it just shows how important that is. The things that we are looking at, I guess, are around government response to this issue and we want a proactive engagement with digital exclusion as an issue. It’s great that we’re looking at digital inclusion and looking at things like access to computers and the internet and the ability to do courses and those are really, really valuable. But we would like to see kind of a specific focus on what it means to be digitally excluded and to ensure that those people are being supported to participate in society, even if that means that for now that that’s not online. So a seam of our work is around public services being accessible to all and making sure that when government agencies are looking at their service design, they are looking at that from a client-centric point of view. So it’s about accessibility and inclusion focused on people’s needs and including offline channels as part of the proactive design of government service delivery.  |
| Niki | I think one of the things that we need is an awful lot more partnership at all levels. This is going to be a continuing challenge for us all of all challenges and Tuakana/teina is an important strategy, probably one of the most important. But at the other end of the scale, we need the companies who design and provide services, the technical people to be come more inclusive themselves and to design things that are not so foreign to the rest of us and I say that even from someone who started computing…it feels like a century ago. In addition to that, we need to try and figure out how we let people have their world online. At the moment the digital world is very English-centric in terms of the English language and the English culture online. It isn’t that the other cultures aren’t online, we’ve heard at least one song on that. But it is it’s hard to influence that linguistic and cultural landscape and we actually need lots of worlds online for the diversity of our country. It’s bilingual and bicultural and multilingual contexts.  |
| Kim | I suppose I’d just like to comment - and I think that’s what I’d like to address, too - is the fact that digital engagement leads to another challenge which is social isolation and I’d like to acknowledge that that is something that we should be considering when we are working online a lot and leaving people behind because that will be something that will become greater as our aging population explodes and I think it’s a real issue now, social isolation for older people. But creating a digital world and access solely for digital engagement will create a larger social problem.  |
| Niki | I think I probably should have mentioned, too, that companies are engaging but it’s going to take a lot more. So for example in the Connected Aranui, that wasn’t Greater Christchurch Schools Network. We were just trying to help that happen and mediate and so there needs to be an awful lot more companies inside there including Spark and the community in Aranui and schools in that area too.  |
| Sacha | One thing I’d like to throw in the mix, I guess, is there’s an impact in the movement of services to an online environment for those who are still operating face-to-face in the community and I think there’s some of the work of government in particular, is kind of shifting over to community-based services and that’s certainly our experience at the CAB, that we at times are made aware of situations where a government agency closes its door to the public and puts up a sign on the door saying, “If you need any help, go and see the CAB.” So we are there to help people and we will help people but we struggle with not being resourced as we should be to do the work we need to do. That’s one of the challenges as well of the shift to online. There’s very much a sense of for public services, increased efficiencies and cost savings but there’s also a reality to the fact that some of that cost is then being shifted to the community. So one of the things we see as part of the way forward is and as mentioned, I mean you know it is really about partnerships. It’s kind of saying well if you’re going to be doing that over there, make sure you are talking to us about it, make sure the planning is including what it is we are going to do to support those who are going to struggle to engage digitally and provide the resource that’s needed to be able to help those who will otherwise be left out or left behind.  |
| Shanelle | In support of what you are saying, as well, Sacha, is probably the effects that similar to CAB with the Libraries, we’ve got government agencies that are making decisions saying, “Hey you need this CV” but then they don’t actually offer that support and help for the customer to be able to get their CV. So in turn, we are getting customers coming into our libraries, our Linwood library has set up a jobseeker area where people can come in and use the computers and that’s just a reaction to the fact that there seems to be decisions that are being made but the flow-on effect of the libraries and you know, what we’re trying to do to be able to support the community to move forward.  |
| Sacha | Absolutely and I think it’s also just that recognition of whatever this future looks like, we need to factor into it the value of human support and the recognition that as good as our digital processes might be, I think we lose something if we don’t recognise in that mix, the importance of people being able to sometimes sit alongside someone else or be on the phone to someone who can help guide them through whatever it is they’re doing. Whether it’s writing their CV, applying for a passport, trying to apply for employment mediation; there’s all manner of things. I don’t think that our movement into a more digital world negates the fact that people still need other people.  |
| Sally | I think in addition to what you’re saying there as well, Sacha - and we’ve touched on the issue of social isolation - is the fact that for some people… banking is the typical example here, but going to the bank is not just because you’re doing your banking, it’s also because you’re actually having a chat with someone. And the more those services are moved online, the less opportunity the people have to have those casual chats which mean a lot to some people.  |
| Shanelle | It was really noticeable during the lockdown, as well, because you were so isolated in your home that when you did go to the supermarket, people were really friendly because it’s that whole social interaction. You’re like, “Oh hi” - two metres or more away from each other - but there was a real sort of sense of actually want to connect and that face to face.  |
| Sacha | Yes during lockdown CAB volunteers around the country worked together with Ministry of Social Development to call people in the over 70s age bracket. So we called 14,000 people and in general, those people were really grateful for someone just checking in on them and seeing how they were and having the chance to have a chat as you say.  |
| Shanelle | Kim was involved with that too, for Christchurch City Council, and you found it quite rewarding.  |
| Kim | Yes, it was an amazing experience. I don’t like the word ‘resilient’ but the age group that we were calling had been through similar challenges before in their lifetime so really, I think, in a way adapted perhaps better than we give people credit for. However, they did enjoy the chat and help or support when we needed to give that advice.  |
| Niki | Yes and the same goes for the kids, you know, being online with their teacher, and that was the teacher’s first job was to check up on their wellbeing. The same goes for young children. So important that the early childhood centres were able to open because it’s about talking to face to face, it’s about engaging and building relationships and if we don’t have relationships, we are going to be a very miserable species and our mental health will really suffer.  |
| Sally | I think that seems like a fantastic point to end on, to remind us of the human value of all this sort of thing. Thank you so much everybody, tēnā koutou, it’s been a really rich discussion and I certainly feel like we have gone around and discussed some great things. So thank you very much for sharing your expertise with us today.  |
| Group | Thank you.  |
|  | **MUSIC - AMARANTHE, ‘DIGITAL WORLD’** |