

**Richard Leonard MSP**  
Convener, Public Audit Committee  
Scottish Parliament (via email)

18 March 2026

Dear Richard,

### **Digital inclusion – Ministerial update to the Public Audit Committee**

I am writing in relation to the letter sent to the Committee by Richard Lochhead MSP, the Minister for Business and Employment, on 9 March 2026 regarding progress on tackling digital exclusion.

I feel it's necessary to correct the record as the information contained in the Minister's letter regarding SCVO is not accurate and we had no advance warning that our name would be used to lend credibility to something we fundamentally disagree with.

The letter states that the Scottish Government has been working closely with partners, including the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), to co-ordinate activity and align resources. That wording gives a misleading impression of SCVO's position. SCVO does not share the Minister's assessment of progress and has been clear in its opposition to key elements of the Scottish Government's current approach.

In particular, SCVO did not support the establishment of the Digital Inclusion Alliance, despite the letter implying alignment with that approach. More broadly, our concerns about the lack of leadership, governance and meaningful progress became so significant that in March last year we ended our decade-long partnership with the Digital Directorate and declined further funding.

It is now more than two years since Audit Scotland published its report on Tackling Digital Exclusion. The report was clear that urgent action was required, including the development of a refreshed strategy and delivery plan setting out outcomes, responsibilities and approaches to collaboration.

However, despite the passage of time, there is still no published delivery plan, no clear timetable for one, and limited transparency around leadership and

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accountability for delivering change. The Minister's letter suggests that a Digital Inclusion Action Plan will now be published after the Scottish Parliament election, which represents a significant delay far beyond the timescales envisaged by Audit Scotland and recommended by the Committee.

Over the past year SCVO has repeatedly raised concerns with Ministers and officials about the lack of meaningful progress. In August last year we published "[Error 404: digital inclusion still not found](#)", which sets out these concerns in detail and highlights the continuing gap between the recommendations made by Audit Scotland and the actions taken to date.

SCVO remains committed to working constructively with government, local authorities and partners across sectors to tackle digital exclusion, for example the highly successful [Digital Lifelines](#) programme. However, we believe it is important that the Committee is aware that many organisations working directly with digitally excluded communities do not consider progress has yet been made.

We would welcome the opportunity to provide further evidence to the Committee should it continue its scrutiny of this issue.

Yours sincerely,



Anna Fowlie  
Chief Executive

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Full link to Error 404: digital inclusion still not found report:  
<https://scvo.scot/support/digital/inclusion/error-404-digital-inclusion-still-not-found>



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