About You	
1.	**Your Name**
	Susan Ward
2.	**Your Employer / Organisation**
	Midlothian Council
3.	**Your Position**
	Quality Improvement Officer for Digital Inclusion and Learning
4.	**Your E-Mail at Work**
	susan.ward@midlothian.gov.uk
5.	**Your Address at Work**
	N/A
6.	**Your Telephone Number at Work**
	N/A
7.	**Your Role in the Project**
	Susan has two primary roles within Midlothian Council. With Equipped for Learning, she contributes to their work in transforming learning, teaching, and assessment in schools and ensuring effective use of the devices that have been distributed to Midlothian-based pupils. She also supports and leads the Digital Inclusion and Learning team and their work in assisting schools
An Introduction to the Project	
8.	**Which partner organisations are involved in delivering the project (local authorities, organisations, community groups, etc.)?**
	Midlothian Council's Digital Services team (technical delivery of the project), Google (provision of Chromebooks and Education Plus Google Workspace), TextHelp (provision of accessibility and literacy support tools, such as Read and Write), Apple (iPads), SMART (Smartboards)
9.	**Does the project have specific aims and/or objectives?** *If so, please add to the box below.*
	The core aim of Equipped for Learning is to equip young people in Midlothian with the digital skills they require for learning, life, and work. This involves improving technological infrastructure in Midlothian schools and providing equitable access to digital devices for school-aged pupils in the area. The goal is to go beyond just the provision of devices for students by ensuring that young people have the skills, support, and software to make the best use of the devices they receive.
10.	**Does the project have a title?** *If so, please add to the box below.*
	Equipped for Learning
11.	**When did it start?**
	The initial idea of the project was approved by Midlothian Council in March 2020, and devices were deployed in November 2021.

12.	**Has it finished? Is it on-going? Does it have an end date?** *Please add dates to the box below.*
	Equipped for Learning is an on-going project that began in 2020. The five-year financial investment will be exhausted by March 2025. However, the provision of services will continue through the 2025/26 academic session.
13.	**Which groups of people, if any, are targeted by the service provided?**
	All school-aged pupils in Midlothian are targeted by Equipped for Learning.
14.	**How many people have been served by the project?**
	Roughly 14,000 school-aged pupils in Midlothian have been provided with a digital device for their education.
15.	**Where is it delivered?**
	Midlothian
The Initial Idea	
16.	**Who had the initial idea?**
	Midlothian Council
17.	**How did the idea for the project come about?**
	The initial idea came about largely as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensuring technological equity in Midlothian was a core part of that. It was also developed to modernise technology in Midlothian schools which was outdated prior to the project. Ensuring Midlothian pupils had the digital skills required to be equipped to move to a positive destination, whether this be further education or work, was also key.
18.	**Did you draw on any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice you had seen elsewhere to inform your plans?** **If so, please add details to the box below.**
	Yes. Midlothian Council drew on several documents in the initial stages of the project, including work that was being carried out by other local authorities and the Scottish Government. There were clear trends that were identified related to technology and its impact on learning. A large portion of the research entailed internal data reviews on the current state of Midlothian and how it could be modernised. This also involved looking at what technology was available to teachers, looking at the digital skills young people had, as well as the positive destinations they were moving to.
19.	**Who was involved in developing the initial idea of the project?**
	Midlothian Council
20.	**Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?**
	There was a stakeholder discussion in the initial stages of the project. Residents, families, and elected members were consulted. However, this was before Susan's tenure so she cannot speak with certainty whether or not there were discussion groups with those with lived experience.
21.	**What funding was used, if any, to support the development of the initial idea of the project?**

	Midlothian Council provide all of the funding for Equipped for Learning.	
22.	**What in-kind resources were needed when developing the initial idea of the project?**	
	Facilities	N/A
	Equipment	iPads and Chromebooks for pupils, Smartboards and improved Wi-Fi for classrooms
	Local Knowledge	N/A
	Food and Drink	N/A
23.	**What, if any, barriers did you have to overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?**	
	The largest barrier was making a case for capital investment and positive change. There were also challenges involving communication with schools during the pandemic, specifically clarifying what technology was coming and why.	
24.	**What, if anything, was helpful when developing the initial idea of the project?**	
	On-going discussions about the project and sharing of information was helpful in the initial stages.	
25.	**Did you conduct a feasibility study?** *(if yes, please describe what you did and what you concluded)*	
	Yes, from which a project scoping paper was created. This then became part of the business case for investment. Further details are unknown as this occurred before Susan's tenure.	
26.	**What was the timeline between the initial idea and the start of the project?**	
	The initial idea was approved by Midlothian Council in March 2020. Provision of devices began in November 2021 and deployment was completed in June 2022.	
27.	**Who made the decision to introduce the project?**	
	Midlothian Council	
Pilot Project		
28.	**Did you run a pilot project?** *(if no, please skip to the next section, Q. 37)*	
	Yes	
29.	**What did you do?** *Please describe the pilot project*	
	Newbattle Community High School received Chromebooks prior to other Midlothian schools. They conducted a pilot project with banks of devices rather than one-to-one devices. This was done to see what the impact was of using digital devices like Chromebooks in classrooms, and testing out Google accounts and other software.	
30.	**Who was involved in the work of the pilot project?**	
	Midlothian Council, Scottish Government, and Gib McMillan (Head Teacher at Newbattle Community High School)	
31.	**How, if at all, were those with lived experience of poverty involved in the pilot of the project?**	

	Unknown. Some pupils with lived experience who had access to the devices would have been monitored and looked after by the school, but this information is confidential to the school.	
32.	**What funding was used, if any, for the pilot project?**	
	Midlothian Council paid for roughly 2,500 devices, and the Scottish Government funded around 1,300.	
33.	**What in-kind resources were used for the pilot project?**	
	Facilities	N/A
	Equipment	Chromebooks
	Local Knowledge	N/A
	Food and Drink	N/A
34.	**Was the pilot project evaluated?** *If yes, please provide details*	
	Yes. The evaluation would have informed the devices that were chosen as well as the mass rollout of devices and the order in which this occurred. However, this occurred prior to Susan's tenure so precise details are unknown.	
35.	**What evidence, if any, from the pilot project was used to confirm that it was working?**	
	Positive feedback confirmed that the project was working, had made a difference at Newbattle, and should be expanded to other schools. Digital learning became an integral part of Newbattle's curriculum due to the provision of devices.	
36.	**Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot project?**	
	Midlothian Council	
37.	**How did the pilot project inform the final design of the project?**	
	The pilot informed the final design of the project fairly closely, with the exception of providing one-to-one devices rather than shared ones. Given the positive feedback on the advantages of digital learning, workload reduction, and the overall positive difference it had made to learning at Newbattle, the pilot closely mirrored Equipped for Learning.	
The On-going Development of the Project		
38.	**Has Equipped for Learning changed through time?**	
	Yes. The first year of the project primarily involved the rapid deployment of devices for all pupils in Midlothian. Year two entailed setting up systems, processes, procedures, and structures to support the use of the devices that had been deployed. They took a collaborative approach to implement mitigations and systems of support. This would have been implemented during year one had the deployment not been so rapid. This year, Equipped for Learning are focusing on transforming digital learning in Midlothian. This involves learning about the difference devices make, supporting teachers to help them make the best use of the devices, and ensuring pupils have what they need to learn effectively. Now that the technological infrastructure is in place, Midlothian are looking at continued investment and ensuring they can provide appropriate, on-going support.	
39.	**In what ways has it changed?**	

	Scale	The devices have now reached every pupil and school in Midlothian.
	Location	N/A
	Population	N/A
	The Offer	Each Midlothian pupil now has free access to Read and Write, a TextHelp accessibility toolbar, on their device. This software provides a range of literacy support, including text to speech software and vice versa, translation tools, a visual dictionary, a text simplifier, highlighter tools, and text to MP4 software which enables students to listen to their notes. There are currently 12,700 active users of Read and Write in Midlothian. Equipped for Learning have removed stigma and increased accessibility tool usage by 529% and have reduced referrals for assistive technology by 90.6%. Gib McMillan, Head Teacher at Newbattle Community High School, reports a 7% increase in literacy levels since Read and Write was installed on devices.
40.	**What were the reason for these changes?**	
	Equipped for Learning are now focused on ensuring effective use of the devices they have provided. The reason for these changes is to ensure educational equity across Midlothian, as each school and pupil receives the same device and software regardless of their financial situation. They are now increasingly focused on the educational outcomes they hope to achieve.	

Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

41.	**Is there a referral process? If yes, how does the referral process work (self-referral, referred by other agencies, identified from an existing database)**
	No. Equipped for Learning is for every pupil and every school in Midlothian. There are certain situations where a referral for an alternative device or specialist software (i.e., eye gaze technology or communication software) is necessary. For example, when a device does not meet a pupil's needs or a young person has more complex learning needs. Aside from these situations, there is no referral process as every pupil and school has access to and support for their digital devices.
42.	**How are potential clients made aware of the project?**
	N/A
43.	**How do you keep in touch with service users? Do your service users have a preferred method of contact?**
	Families are informed about Equipped for Learning primarily through schools. Communication also occurs through parent-council chairs, elected members, and an Equipped for Learning board. They are currently setting up stakeholder groups and a digital working group of parents who are hoping to come together to discuss Equipped for Learning.

Working With People with Lived Experience of Poverty

44.	**Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?** *If so, please describe below.*
	No

45.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project, <u>supervision</u> within the project, or project <u>governance</u>? *If so, please describe below.*
	No
46.	Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? *If so, please describe below.*
	Generally, no. However, there is currently work occurring in Midlothian surrounding attendance and inclusion in schools. Equipped for Learning work closely with these teams to ensure that they are meeting those needs. Equipped for Learning are also linked with home-school link workers and organisations who are supporting families with continued learning and children who are sporadically attending school. There are often poverty-related reasons around poor attendance. Equipped for Learning also address inequity regarding connectivity in homes, and provide free Wi-Fi dongles for families in need.

Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working	
47.	Who has overall responsibility for Equipped for Learning?
	Midlothian Council
48.	Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project? *If not please describe the manager's wider roles and responsibilities.*
	No, Midlothian Council have various other responsibilities related to the welfare of their residents. Equipped for Learning is part of the Midlothian Digital Inclusion and Learning Team, who contribute to the wider work on education in Midlothian and strive to equip Midlothian pupils with the digital skills they need for life, learning, and work.
49.	Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group or Organising Committee? *If yes, who is involved in this and how does it work.*
	Yes. There are monthly board meetings where work and knowledge is shared. The board is made up of senior staff in the education team, head teachers, and corporate colleagues who oversee the project's agenda, digital devices, and finances. If there are decisions or risks that need escalating, this goes to the board for them to make a decision. There are also multiple boards who report to one another during which the decision-making process is regularly scrutinised.
50.	If there is no Steering Group, what governance arrangements are in place to review strategy and performance?
	N/A

Staffing	
51.	Are there any paid staff? *Please describe their role and their contribution.*
	All of Equipped for Learning's staff are paid Midlothian Council staff who are part of the existing Digital Inclusion and Learning Team. They work on delivering and transforming Equipped for Learning, including working with and supporting pupils, schools and families.
52.	Are volunteers involved in delivering the project? *Please describe their role and their contribution.*
	No

Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements	

53.	**Is the project part of a wider anti-poverty strategy?** *If so, please give details.*	
	Yes. It is recognised within Midlothian's wider strategy in ensuring positive outcomes for young people. It is also part of Midlothian's Poverty Strategy and Attainment Strategy, which aims to close the gap between the most and least disadvantaged young people and children in Midlothian.	
54.	**Is the project part of any other strategy?** *If so, please give details.*	
	Yes. Equipped for Learning is part of Midlothian's Attainment Strategy. It is also part of Midlothian's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy as well as their Attendance Strategy. It is a named part of these strategies because of what Equipped for Learning provides and gives access to.	
55.	**Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?** *If so, please give details.*	
	No	
Funding		
56.	**Who funds the project?** *Please give details.*	
	Midlothian Council	
57.	**How is the project funded?**	
	Midlothian Council have invested £10.5 million into Equipped for Learning, inclusive of the devices themselves, the software provided, and the support given to schools and families. The project is on budget and anticipated to have exhausted its funds by the end of the project's fifth year.	
58.	**What is the budget for the project / how much does it cost to deliver?**	
	The budget for the project is £10.5 million. Equipped for Learning is currently on track to be on budget and meet the deliverables required. It is anticipated that the funds will be exhausted by the end of the project's fifth year.	
59.	**Is future funding based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?** *If so, please give details*	
	Yes. Future funding is dependent on performance and evidence that the devices are making an impact. They are currently making that case in order to maintain their work. Midlothian's two most recent independent school inspection reports relayed the effective use of digital technology and its positive impact for young people, which is vital for making the case for future investment. Future funding is also based on the devices remaining healthy and intact. Midlothian Council and Midlothian schools have a number of people working on device management to ensure the devices remain in good condition.	
Resources		
60.	**What in-kind resources do you need to deliver your project?**	
	Facilities	N/A
	Equipment	Chromebooks, iPads, Smartboards, Education Plus Google Workspace, Read and Write software
	Local Knowledge	N/A
	Food and Drink	N/A

61.	For each of the in-kind resources listed above, who provides it?	
	Facilities	N/A
	Equipment	Google, Apple, SMART, TextHelp
	Local Knowledge	N/A
	Food and Drink	N/A
62.	Did you have to buy or develop new IT systems, software (databases, apps) or technology to deliver your project? *Please describe below.*	
	Yes. Every aspect of the project has required new technology and software.	
63.	Was additional staff training required to deliver your project? *If so, please describe.*	
	Training related to the technical aspects of the digital devices and how to troubleshoot in schools has occurred. There has also been a lot of on-going professional learning related to the use of technology in education. Midlothian Council want their staff to be inspired advocates of technology.	
Formal Monitoring and Evaluation		
64.	What information, if any, do you collect about your project?	
	Number of users	About 14,000 pupils have been served by the project.
	Profile of users	Data is collected on how many pupils require assistive technology. This has decreased from 440 pupils in need to 41 since the introduction of Read and Write.
	Experience of users	• Feedback from information sessions for staff, families, and young people. • Anecdotal evidence from staff related to confidence levels in schools.
	Anything else	• Data on rates of damage to devices, software usage rates, and when and how often pupils are online. • Data on staff training and professional learning. • Data on targets set with schools in relation to their improvement plans is collected and reviewed biannually.
65.	How often is data collected? Who collects the data?	
	Data collection is on-going, with reports being collated monthly. These reports highlight the key themes that have occurred and anything that needs to be escalated to the board. Termly reports that detail all knowledge acquired about the project and what direction it is moving to are also produced. Midlothian Council and Equipped for Learning collect the data.	
66.	Do you have baseline data on what things were like before the start of the project or before users started the project? *Please describe the type of baseline data that you have.*	
	Yes. Midlothian Council have produced numerous reports that provide data on the makeup of Midlothian. Examples of reports that focus on education and young people include Midlothian's Education Service Plan 2020/21 and Midlothian's Local Child	

	Poverty Action Report Year 3 (20/21), which both detail what things were like prior to the project.
67.	**Do you produce an annual report?** *Please provide details of what this includes.*
	Yes. Although reporting occurs throughout the year, Equipped for Learning have an end of year review which results in two annual reports. One is produced at the end of the financial year which details what has been spent, whether or not they are on budget, and what the predicted spends are for the next financial quarter. The other report is produced at the end of the academic year which details achievements and new areas of focus for the following academic session.
68.	**In what ways, if at all, do you use the data that you collect to adapt the service that you provide?**
	Those at Equipped for Learning are constantly learning about what works and what does not work. They adapt the project when something does not work as planned. For instance, software that does not make an impact will be discontinued. They continue to shape the project to best meet the needs and demands of everyone involved.
69.	**Have you employed an external organisation to formally evaluate your project?** *If yes, please provide details.*
	Yes. An external evaluation occurred at the start of the project to help review, report, and secure investment for Equipped for Learning. Evaluations are now delivered internally and are not outsourced. Two Midlothian schools, Saltersgate School and St Andrew's Primary School, have recently been inspected by Education Scotland. The effective use of digital devices by staff and pupils were mentioned in these reports.
70.	**If yes, in what ways, if at all, have you used the External Project evaluation to adapt the service that you provide.**
	Unknown
71.	**Do you intend to employ an external organisation to evaluate the service that you provide in the future?** *If yes, please provide details.*
	Evaluation will continue to be internal, although Midlothian Council do bring in external services when needed. For instance, a security audit recently occurred to look at their Google environments and give technical recommendations on security.
Impact	
72.	**What difference has the project made?**
	Equipped for Learning has transformed digital learning in Midlothian and removed barriers for young people by facilitating equitable access to digital devices and software. By providing holistic learning support, including accessibility tools and safeguarding technology, the project goes beyond just providing a device for Midlothian's pupils. The installation of Read and Write on all devices has been pivotal for pupils and staff alike. Referrals for assistive technology has been reduced significantly, stigma related to assistive technology has been removed, and usage of accessibility tools has increased dramatically.
73.	**How do you know this? What evidence demonstrates impact (metrics, interviews, feedback)?**
	Evidence that demonstrates this includes feedback from information sessions, data on usage of devices and accessibility tools such as Read and Write, and evidence from school inspections.

74.	**To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?**
	Equipped for Learning is on track to achieve the aims that have been put in place within each academic session and those for the project as a whole. Many of the aims have already been achieved, including the deployment of devices, installing Wi-Fi networks in schools and homes, implementing literacy support software and safeguarding technology on all devices.
75.	**How, if at all, has the demand for the service provided by XXX changed since it started?**
	Equipped for Learning provides is meeting the needs of pupils, staff, and families. The project is something Midlothian Council chose to implement rather than to meet a demand, so this question does not apply.
76.	**If yes, has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?** *Please describe and explain below.*
	N/A
77.	**Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?** *If so, whether positive or negative, please describe.*
	There has been a shift in understanding of what digital learning means and how it is part of every aspect of education. In the initial stages of Equipped for Learning, some thought the project would come to an end after devices were deployed and networks were improved. Susan, amongst others, felt strongly that the project should continue, take on a holistic approach to improving Midlothian, and become something that people could feel a part of. This move from solely technical delivery to supporting pupils and staff with their devices and improving digital learning in Midlothian has been a positive, unexpected change.
78.	**In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty? If so, please describe in what ways.**
	Yes. Due to the equitable way in which they are supplying devices, Equipped for Learning is having an impact on tackling poverty. Every young person in Midlothian has a safe and healthy device for learning, regardless of their financial situation. They have also been able to install Wi-Fi in homes that have poor connectivity.
Learning from Experience	
79.	**What is working well?**
	Equipped for Learning staff have developed strong, professional relationships which is at the heart of their success. Another important aspect that is working well is their understanding work on online safeguarding to keep young people safe. For instance, filtering software has been implemented on devices to prevent young people accessing explicit content. There is also multi-agency support for pupils who search something troubling. Another aspect that is working well is the creation of resources to support people to get involved with the project. This has broadened the reach of the project as those interested can contribute without waiting on a staff member.
80.	**What, if anything, is working less well?**
	There are inevitable challenges around supporting staff in schools when they are already stretched and working at capacity. It is also difficult to manage devices, completely ensure their health and safety, and understand the circumstances around malicious damage. There have also been some learning experiences regarding software that has not been impactful or is not working for staff.

81.	What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners? For example, is there anything that you would do differently?
	Establishing strong relationships between staff as well as their roles and responsibilities at the start of any project is essential. Developing that foundation is something that can be drawn upon at any time, both when things are going well or not. Your preferences may also differ with stakeholders', and it is important to adapt to that and be agile in your thinking. It is also vital to constantly review and address what is bothersome, as that will likely be the next thing that needs to be worked on.
82.	What plans do you have to develop or expand the project in the future?
	Midlothian Council are committed to maintaining the provision of devices for young people. The prevalence of AI is something they will need to navigate as they look to develop. They are constantly looking at what is coming next technologically and how they can best equip their pupils in this process. Going forward, they aim to reduce barriers surrounding course choices further. For instance, developing online classes so students do not have to travel to another school to take the course they would like to. They will also continue to work with their partners to make best use of the technology they provide.
83.	How easily do you think your project could be replicated in another setting?
	This project could be, and already is being, replicated in other settings. The biggest challenge would be the upfront investment, especially for larger authorities.

Social-Media	
84.	Please enter social media contact details and weblinks to supporting documents or resources below:

Web Pages	[Website for Equipped for Learning](#)
Facebook	N/A
Instagram	N/A
Twitter	@MidDigiLearn
Tik-Tok	N/A

GDPR Consent (Add yes or no in the box)	
I give my permission to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.	Yes
I give permission for our organisation to be named in the tackling poverty locally directory and associated public outputs.	Yes
I give permission for me to be contacted by directory users.	Yes
I am willing to be contacted if more details are required	Yes