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## People Know How Briefing Social Justice and Social Security Committee

People Know How is a Scottish social innovation charity with a passion for solving social issues. Based in Edinburgh and East Lothian, we work with people and communities to develop innovative strategies and services to address social issues both locally and nationally. Our aim is to support and empower both individuals and organisations to mobilise their assets and realise their true potential. Often, people do not realise that they know how. That's where we come in, unlocking ideas for a brighter future.

Before the pandemic our services, Positive Transitions and Reconnect, delivered support to children, young people and families in the transition to high school; and adults and families in need of digital support to improve wellbeing and social isolation. When the pandemic hit, we quickly adapted our services to online and over the phone support.

As many services and organisations also moved online, we developed our COVID-emergency response project and delivered over 2,000 devices to people across Edinburgh and East Lothian, while also offering follow up digital support for those who had received a device, as well as a friendly ear to those who may have been feeling isolated. We also began to collaborate with the Scottish Government's Connecting Scotland programme, operating the scheme's national helpline.

Alongside this work our projects for children, young people and families continued to provide support online and over the phone, through both one-to-one online befriending and groups held via Microsoft Teams that made use of online games and activities.

Throughout this support we found that we continued to face the same obstacle towards digital inclusion – data poverty. To explore this further, we invited key voices in digital from across the four sectors (public, third, business and academic) to come together and share their experiences from the pandemic in our event, Connect Four Digital Inclusion. From these discussions, we derived our Connectivity Now campaign to end data poverty, with its three main actions that form our campaign manifesto: regulate connectivity, link connectivity to shared spaces and zero-rate essential service websites.

As we move forward and learn to recover and live with COVID-19, we aim to continue the momentum of what we achieved during the pandemic. With a renewed strategy we aim to:

- Build on our experience to ensure a positive transition from primary to secondary school for all children across Scotland



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- Leverage our learning from Reconnect to ensure everyone has affordable data, increasing digital inclusion
- Establish social innovation as a model for positive change and bring the phrase “social innovation” into everyday language
- Support the development of charities and their ideas through our Social Innovation Academy

We’re excited to take these goals forward through social innovation and cross-sectoral collaboration.

### **Longer-term resilience of the third sector and the challenges it faces**

People Know How was in a unique position when the pandemic hit, operating in two high profile spheres. 1 – supporting children on the move from primary to secondary school, when suddenly all P7s went into home-schooling and their next in person experience of school was as an S1 at secondary school. 2 – supporting people to become digitally included and have the three essential elements - a device, skills and data. We were able to respond quickly to increased demand and took up every possible additional support of funding from trusts, foundations and Scottish Government. We onboarded 6 additional staff and over 150 VIPs (volunteers, interns and placement students).

During 2021 we have reviewed our strategic plan and are in the final phase of bringing a new organisational design and staffing structure, to deliver an ambitious strategy. These plans will see People Know How grow from an annual income in 2019/20 of just over £300,000 to over a million pounds in 2021/22.

We know that how People Know How has fared through the pandemic is not representative of other charities. The specific factors that supported us:

1. We were already on a trajectory for growth (although not as fast or steep)
2. We were operating in two spheres where we could scale quickly
3. We were digitally agile as an organisation prior to Covid
4. We had leadership capacity to expand
5. We had capacity and skills to apply to the new funding streams that opened up
6. We already had systems in place to onboard additional VIPs and staff



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