The Falkirk Wheel

Planning Essentials drives vision for Connected Falkirk Programme

The Connected Falkirk programme was developed to transform learning and teaching using digital technology and meet the growing demand for digital skills in life, learning and work. Digital learning and remote working are now part of all our lives and the Programme plays a critical role in preparing young people with the skills to help them secure their future.

Upscaling the idea

Falkirk Council had some big ideas and ambitions but bringing that to life required some in-depth visioning and planning. XMA stepped in to support this phase with their Planning Essentials workshop, delivered using hands on dialogue and practical activities.

This workshop gave the council the important opportunity to ensure our values were aligned with theirs. It also allowed us to display our shared understanding of the education landscape and belief in transformational change. During the planning essentials phase, we reviewed:

| Vision for teaching and learning | The journey to full deployment | Values and desired outcomes | Questions and concerns |

The Programme will:

- Provide a digital device for all Primary 6 to Secondary S6 school pupils
- Provide shared devices to Primary 1 to Primary 5 classes
- Provide a device to every class teacher, supported by an accredited professional learning programme
- Ensure fast, reliable Internet connectivity in all our schools
- Provide families with an opportunity to be digitally connected

"As we started our partnership with XMA it was clear that they were able to meet our high expectations for the programme and could work with us to deliver the best for our learners and their educators."
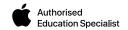
– **Stuart Lennie, Connected Falkirk Programme Manager**

The session was a key contributor in removing ambiguity from the Programme process, installing an open and trusting environment right from the start. Working together in this way with the council, meant that clear and realistic outcomes, timelines and roles and responsibilities could be developed for the Programme.

The Planning Essentials uncovered some clear considerations from both sides:

How do you successfully and seamlessly deploy at scale?

Logistics and Programme management considerations

How is a large estate of approx. 15,000 devices managed?

How do we support the adoption of that technology?

What are the options to finance the Programme and how can we ensure our investment is cost efficient in the long term?

What is a Planning Essentials Workshop?

We work with your senior leadership teams to understand how you envision Apple technology enhancing teaching and learning in your environment, and how this will fit in to your current culture. We focus on 4 key areas – Vision and Strategy, Learning, Teaching and Environment. By exploring these individually and together, we generate a comprehensive overview of what a journey to innovation could look like. When deploying any technology there are many considerations to make to ensure it is successful and sustainable. We work with you to explore what success looks like for you.

"*The planning essentials workshop helped us to realise the areas we needed to develop as a Council. Whilst it is fair to say we came to the table with knowledge and experience of device deployment and digital learning, the workshop allowed us to prioritise where we needed to spend planning time and where there were gaps that we had previously not considered.*"
– Stuart Lennie, Connected Falkirk Programme Manager

Challenges

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our working relationship had to become completely virtual which meant a big shift in communication methods from that first workshop. We also had to be flexible and resilient in responding to the unknown and prepared for a change in milestones and methods of deployment. Despite these challenges, the scope of the Programme and the desired outcomes have not changed. Indeed we were ahead of time in deployment which demonstrates the importance of being agile and responsive when working closely with the council and the ability to find different ways of working, with a focus on achieving transformation together.

Why XMA?

XMA's experience of large-scale deployments meant we were able to help in upscaling the council's ideas into workable plans. As Scottish Government national framework suppliers for the last eight years, we have worked with and supplied the council with education technology solutions prior to this Programme, so the council could already trust in our abilities and reputation. We made sure to involve the right people – our experts from both XMA and our vendor relationships – so the council were able to properly benefit from the expertise and knowledge we bring to the table.

As well as building a foundation of trust from the beginning of Planning Essentials, we were able to offer the right fit of technology, services and procurement options to enable the Connected Falkirk Programme vision. The Programme is about more than deploying technology now, but about the future as well. This considered, we also built the plan around long-term outcomes.

- **A technology adoption plan that means teaching and learning enhancements can continue**

- **A device management plan that means the councils digital landscape can be introduced and maintained with ease**

- **Environmental and economic plans including considering how to manage end-of-life devices and future refresh requirements**