reconome

repurposing tech to unlock human potential

Demystifying Devices for Digital Inclusion

A practical guide to choosing the right tech for your beneficiaries

Introduction:

Access to the right technology can transform someone's life: enabling communication, independence, learning, employment, and connection. But choosing the right device for beneficiaries can feel overwhelming. Technical jargon, rapidly changing hardware, and tight budgets make the process difficult for even the most experienced teams.

This guide **simplifies everything.**

At Reconome, we refurbish and redeploy enterprise-grade devices to extend their life and help close the digital divide. As a B Corp, we prioritise impact, quality, and accessibility. This booklet breaks down the essentials so organisations can make informed decisions, avoid common pitfalls, and maximise their budgets.

You don't need to be a tech expert.

You just need a **clear starting point,** and that's exactly what this guide provides.

Reconome is a pioneering B Corp on a mission to extend the life and value of technology.

Our circular IT asset disposition (ITAD) service ensures devices are securely wiped, refurbished and reused, helping to bridge the digital divide by providing devices to those who need them most.

Through our sustainable procurement service, we supply clients with warrantied, enterprise-grade refurbished devices, offering a lower-carbon, low-cost alternative to buying new.

Our fully managed digital inclusion programmes make it easy for organisations to deliver tangible social impact with clarity and confidence, helping close the digital divide for underserved communities.

As the tech partner of the Good Things Foundation, Reconome powers the National Device Bank, the UK's flagship digital inclusion programme.

What this guide covers:

This booklet offers a practical overview of:

- ❯ Choosing the right device for your beneficiary

- ❯ Understanding key device specs

- ❯ Balancing functionality with value for money

- ❯ Minimum specifications for device safety

- ❯ Accessibility and connectivity considerations

- ❯ New vs. refurbished devices

- ❯ Avoiding common pitfalls

1. Start With the Beneficiary

The most important factor when selecting a device isn't the brand or spec sheet, it's the person who will be using it.

Start With the Beneficiary

It's important to do some work and research into what devices are going to be suitable for the beneficiaries you serve.

To set the scene, below are some common beneficiary profiles and the device types that typically work best for them, based on insights and real-world experience.

People Experiencing Homelessness

Recommended device: Basic smartphone

Smartphones are the most practical and safe option for individuals in unstable living situations.

They are:

- Compact and easy to carry discreetly

- Essential for accessing support services

- Useful for calls, emails, maps, and appointments

- Less likely to attract attention or theft

The priority here is durability, portability, and the ability to stay connected.

Start With the Beneficiary

Seniors

Recommended device: Tablet

Many seniors find tablets easier and less intimidating than laptops.

Tablets offer:

- A simple, intuitive interface

- Large, clear screens for visibility

- Comfortable handheld use

- Strong accessibility settings

- Reduced cognitive load compared to complex laptop systems

For individuals new to technology, this can significantly increase confidence and engagement.

Start With the Beneficiary

Young People & People Seeking Asylum

Recommended device: Laptop or Chromebook

These groups often need to:

- Produce CVs

- Apply for jobs

- Complete education or training

- Fill in complex forms

- Build workplace-ready digital skills

A device with a keyboard, full browser experience, and file management makes a profound difference.

2. Understanding Device Types and Specifications

Cut through the jargon and understand what actually matters.

Laptops: What You Need to Know

Operating System

- Windows 11 is now the standard.
- Windows 10 has extended support but should be phased out.
- A Windows laptop requires an **Intel 8th Generation processor or newer** to support Windows 11.

How to check processor generation:

- Use the first digit after the hyphen for older 4-digit models
  - Example: Intel® Core™ i5-8265U → the first digit ("8") is the generation.

- Use the first two digits after the hyphen for newer 5-digit models
  - Example: Intel® Core™ i7-1255U → the first two digits ("12") is the generation.

Memory (RAM)

- At least **8GB** is recommended.

- **16GB** provides smoother performance, especially for multitasking. Anything above that is unnecessary unless you're doing heavy lifting like video editing etc

Storage

- Minimum **128GB**.
- 256–512GB is ideal for most users.
- Avoid paying for unnecessary excess storage.

The first digit of the numeric (in this case, 8) is the generation number.

Device specifications

Device name	
Full device name	
Processor	Intel(R) Core(TM) i5-8265U CPU @ 1.60GHz 1.80 GHz
Installed RAM	8.00 GB (7.87 GB usable)

Alternative Operating Systems

- **Linux**: Free, reliable, suitable for browsing and document tools.

- **Chrome Flex**: Turns older laptops into Chrome OS-style devices; includes free Google tools.
  - Check if the laptop make and model is Flex compatible here: https://support.google.com/chromeosflex/answer/11513094?hl=en

Chromebooks

Key takeaway information when choosing Chromebooks

❯ Due to their simplicity, they are widely used in education; now expanding in the private sector

❯ **AUE: Auto Update Expiration**

The date when the Chromebook stops receiving security updates. Always ensure:

- **At least 12 months of support** remaining

- Check by clicking here: **https://support.google.com/chrome/a/answer/6220366?hl=en**

Note: Refurbished Chromebooks from schools have often suffered cosmetically

Android Phones & Tablets

The Android ecosystem evolves quickly, but selecting the right device becomes far easier when you focus on:

Operating System Support

- Look for devices running **Android 14** or with confirmed security update support.

- Check support status on **GSM Arena** or **EndOfLife.date**

Minimum Specifications

- 32GB storage
- 3GB RAM

This ensures reasonable performance for everyday tasks.

Essential Features

Choose devices with:

- Functional camera and microphone for video calls

- **4G LTE or 5G** capability

- **NFC** (required for e-visas, contactless payments, and document scanning)

Important:
3G has been switched off - avoid 3G-only devices.

What About Apple Devices?

Apple devices are excellent but often impractical for digital inclusion programmes:

- Apple ID setup can be complex

- More restrictive ecosystem

- Considerably more expensive

- Android allows seamless access to free Google tools

For budget-conscious programmes, Apple rarely offers the best value.

3. Minimum Requirements for Safety and Longevity

How to ensure every device is secure, supported, and ready for real-world use.

3. Minimum Requirements for Safety & Longevity

To ensure devices are safe, secure, and usable in the long term, check that:

The operating system is supported and appropriate
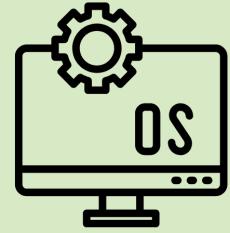
Minimum **12 months of security updates** remaining

RAM, processor, and storage meet minimum standards
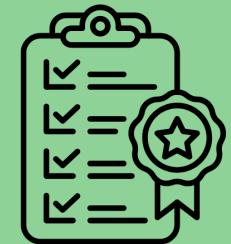
Battery health is strong enough for daily use

If you're unsure about any of the above, your supplier should confirm it for you - and you can always contact us at rethink@recono.me if you'd like support or guidance.

4. Accessibility and Connectivity

Small setup choices that make devices easier, more intuitive, and more empowering.

4. Accessibility and Connectivity

A beneficiary's experience is shaped not only by the device type but also by how well it's configured for their needs.

Accessibility Features

Modern devices include powerful built-in accessibility functions. These can significantly improve usability for:

- Older adults

- People with disabilities

- Individuals with low digital skills

Key features to explore:

- Larger text and display adjustments

- Screen readers and voice control

- Guided access / kiosk mode

- **AbilityNet's free accessibility guides: https://mcmw.abilitynet.org.uk/**
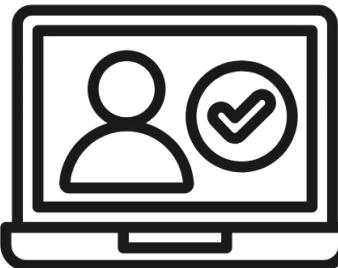
Connectivity Considerations

A device is only as useful as its ability to get online.

Consider:

- Whether the beneficiary has stable WiFi

- Whether they need a **SIM-enabled device**

- Whether portability is essential

- Whether 4G/5G is a requirement

- Whether the device type supports SIM cards (e.g., not all tablets do)

Some laptops and Chromebooks include SIM slots, though these are less common.

5. New vs. Refurbished Devices

How to stretch your budget further without compromising on quality.
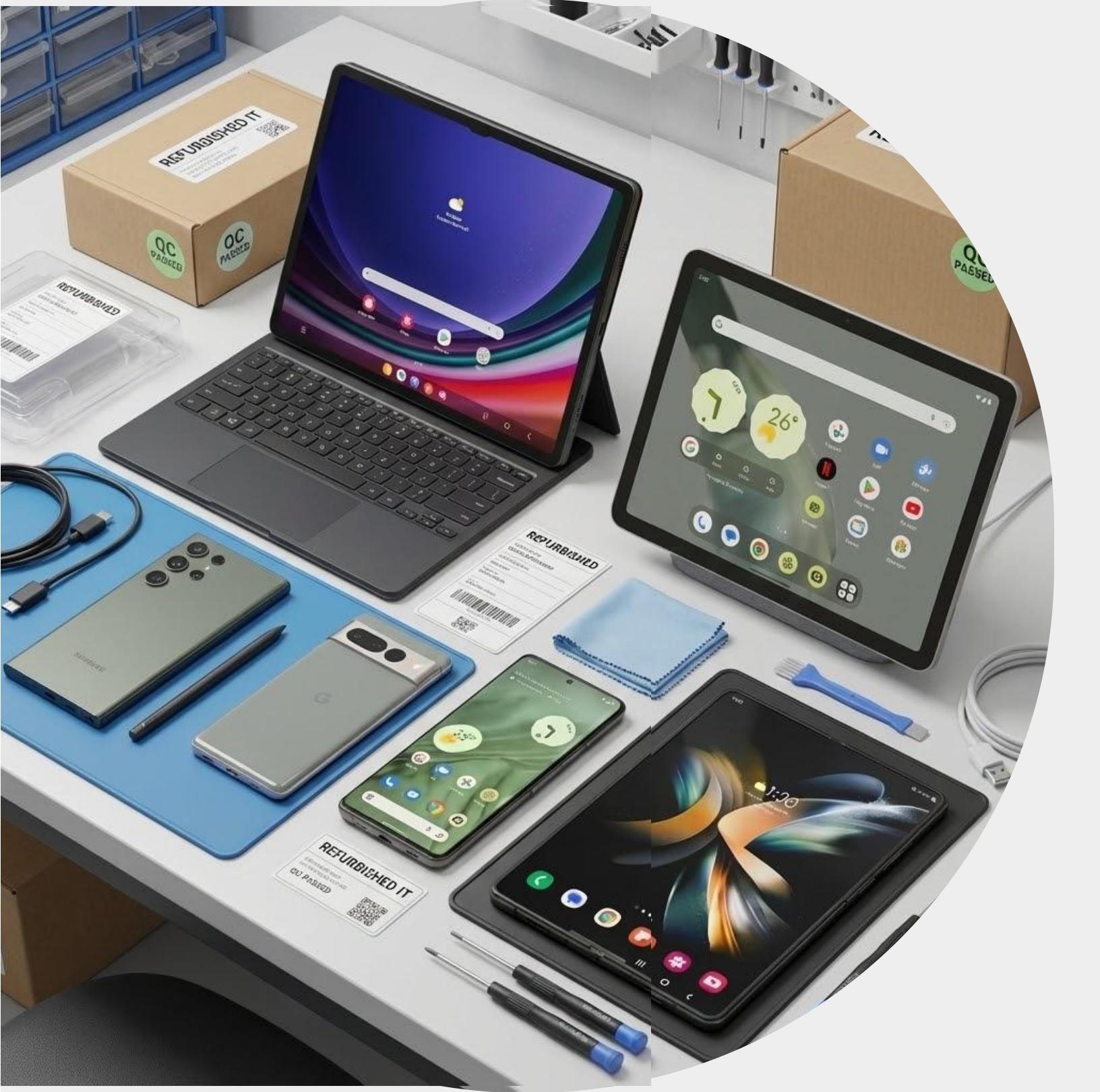
Why Refurbished Often Makes More Sense

Buying new reduces the number of people you can support due to higher cost per device. High-quality refurbished devices offer:

- Comparable performance to new models

- Extended usable lifespan

- Warranty and aftercare similar to new

- Huge environmental benefits

- Better use of limited budgets

Refurbished also allows organisations to **communicate clear ESG impact** - such as avoided carbon emissions - because a device has been given a second life instead of being manufactured anew.

What to Watch Out For

**Avoid extremely cheap devices (e.g., £9.99 tablets) sold on discount platforms.
They may seem appealing but typically have:**

- Weak processors

- Poor longevity

- Outdated operating systems

- Minimal storage

- Unreliable build quality

If a deal seems too good to be true, it usually is.

Questions to Ask Any Supplier

Before buying refurbished devices, ensure the supplier can provide:

- A **cosmetic grading matrix**

- Details of their data wiping process

- Proof of **professional testing**

- Battery health scores (ideally 70–80%+)

- Warranty and returns information

- A sample unit, especially for bulk orders

Avoid attempting to wipe donated devices yourself — this requires professional, compliant processes.

6. Summary

A quick checklist to guide your digital inclusion device strategy.

Match device type to beneficiary needs.

Focus on minimum specs and support.

Use refurbished devices smartly: cost and environmental benefits.

Check accessibility and connectivity.

Avoid common pitfalls: poor quality, low battery, outdated OS.

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Need support or advice?

Reconome is here to help.

Whether you're building a digital inclusion programme from scratch or assessing your current device procurement strategy, we're happy to guide you through next steps, share best practices, or recommend suitable devices.

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