Blueprint for a 100% Digital Included Nation: #BridgingtheDigitalDivide

Digital exclusion in the UK is holding back economic growth and stalling social inclusion. In 2018, 11.3 million adults[1] lack one or more of the basic digital skills for life and work. At current rates of progress, by 2028 there will still be 6.9 million people[2] without these skills. In a world where increasingly we rely on digital in all areas of our lives, this is too slow.

We believe that everyone in the UK should have the confidence, skills, support and access to use digital technology to participate in society and benefit from the digital world. And we want to move faster towards realising this aim.

Our vision is a world where *everyone* has the opportunity to benefit from digital.

For those people who are most socially excluded the digital divide is exacerbating the centuries old social inequality in our communities. The people who are most likely to gain the most from flexible and convenient online services, and to be heavy users of public services such as the NHS and Universal Credit, are the very people most likely to be digitally excluded. Research shows that working-age (16-64) adults in households defined in the social group DE are three times as likely as those in higher income and more educated (non-DE) households to be non-users of the internet (12% vs. 4%)[3].

We are calling on organisations big and small, and from all and any sector, to:
- Commit to the ambitious partner goal of a 100% digitally included nation by 2028
- Commit to helping to reach that goal
- Join the campaign and help spread the word.

This Blueprint sets out **six objectives** that we believe are critical in achieving this goal.

Alongside this work, the Government has established a Digital Skills Partnership taking forward cross-sector action on digital skills, and we hope that the objectives in this Blueprint can be supported and reinforced through the work of the Digital Skills Partnership.

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[1] Source: Lloyds Banking Group Consumer Digital Index, 2018
[2] Source: The economic impact of Digital Inclusion in the UK, Cebr and Good Things Foundation, 2018
[3] Source: Ofcom's 2018 Adult's Media Use and Attitudes Report

What do we need to do together?

1. Set a bold ambition: agree a goal of a 100% digitally included nation by 2028

Decision-makers within all parts of British society need to be bolder in their digital inclusion ambitions. There is clear and detailed evidence showing the economic benefits of moving to a 100% digitally included nation; analysis by CEBR[4] shows that there is a benefit of almost £15 for every £1 invested in basic digital skills.

Alongside this, there is a social and moral imperative to act. In a world where technology is everywhere in our lives, and something we all depend on, it is simply unacceptable that so many people - particularly those facing the greatest barriers - are being left behind.

We need *all* organisations - big and small, public, private, and social sector - to commit to work together towards a shared goal of a 100% digitally included nation by 2028. This means everyone having all of the basic digital skills required to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world[5] or able to use the internet with support.

This bold ambition will require action on connectivity as well as motivation and skills, to ensure that wherever people live, they are able to access the internet and use digital technology.

2. Drive motivation: promote the benefits of the internet

A significant proportion of the UK adult population are either offline or use the internet only in a limited way - for example, less than once a week and across a narrow range of tasks. 12% of UK adults are non-users of the internet, and 25% of all internet users are 'limited users'. They are more likely to be older, in social classes DE and have left education before the age of 16.[6]

- More than half of non-users (52%) say they don't go online because 'they don't see the need' or because 'being online is not for people like them' - this is particularly the case among internet users aged 65+.[7]
- More than three in five non-users say that nothing would encourage them to go online in the next 12 months (63%), although this is less likely for non-users aged 16-64 (47%) than for those aged 65+ (74%).
- 41% of limited users say they go online less than once a day, double the proportion of all internet users.[8]

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[4] Source: Cebr, The economic impact of Digital Inclusion in the UK (a report for Good Things Foundation), 2018

[5] See Essential Digital Skills Framework, 2018.

[6] Source: Good Things Foundation's 2017 The real digital divide? Understanding the demographics of non-users and limited users of the internet: an analysis of Ofcom data

[7] Source: Ofcom's 2018 Adult's Media Use and Attitudes Report

[8] Source: Ofcom's 2018 Adult's Media Use and Attitudes Report

Evidence shows that motivation and mindset are significant barriers to engagement with the digital world, and are connected to and driven by a wide range of practical barriers in people's lives, from poverty and homelessness to social isolation and caring responsibilities.

We need to do even more to inspire and persuade those who are offline that digital technology and the internet can help them improve their lives: and that risks to safety and privacy can be addressed. People who have benefitted from digital and want to share their stories with their peers can play an important role in achieving this.

We also need to recognise that small businesses, entrepreneurs, and small charities, can experience similar - albeit different - motivational barriers to embracing and using digital technology. Specialist organisations should work together to overcome these barriers. There is both a social and economic case for doing so.

We need to:
- Understand the motivations of non-users and limited users of the internet in even greater detail so that we can design even more effective ways of reaching them

- Find even more routes for reaching the people in these groups reflecting the barriers they face (poverty, homelessness, social isolation, disengagement with education)

- Raise public awareness of the benefits of digital technology and the support available to help people engage, through a sustained campaign or series of campaigns. Powerful storytelling from 'people like me' should form part of this

- Campaigning should also encourage even more people to take up the role of volunteer Digital Champion, helping others in their community.

3. Build skills: provide free essential digital skills support for everyone who needs it

Everyone should have the essential digital skills required to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world, or support others to do so. These skills - whether applied in our personal lives or in the work environment - were re-defined by a cross sector partnership during 2018, creating a new UK Essential Digital Skills Framework[9].

Those facing social exclusion, including those depending most on the NHS or needing to access Universal Credit, must be a priority for support.

A wide range of organisations already help people gain these skills, from FE colleges and private sector initiatives to small community organisations: and we need this activity to continue.

However, evidence shows that for those facing the greatest barriers, community-based approaches, free at the point of delivery and combining a blend of online and offline support, are most effective in securing

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[9] Framework can be viewed via GOV.UK.

engagement with digital. This is particularly true for those who are or have become disengaged with formal education. The idea of 'trusted faces in local places' is critical in achieving a 100% digitally included nation, and this means ensuring people and organisations who provide essential digital skills support in communities can continue to provide this support, and do even more.

Online safety and security are of paramount importance in digital inclusion, and should be built into all support, keeping pace with the latest trends in digital and society.

Data from Government, local authorities and other sources can be even better used to identify those needing essential digital skills and the type of support that will work best for them.

Finally, it is important that as well as learning essential digital skills, people are supported to progress, so that they become regular, independent and safe users of digital technology. We should all be able to thrive in the digital world. This means helping people develop the confidence and resilience to get the most from digital both now and into the future.

We need to:
- Ensure current and future Government policy on adult skills and training supports both essential digital skills, and an inclusive and effective offer that engages those facing social exclusion who are furthest from informal and formal education provision

- Support people and organisations in communities that can reach those in need of essential digital skills who cannot be reached in any other way (community groups, Housing Providers, social clubs and a wide range of other 'hyper local' organisations)

- Ensure that people receive wider support that builds their digital confidence and resilience, helping as many as possible to become regular, independent, and safe users of digital technology

- Ensure that internet safety and security are prioritised within essential digital skills support, reflecting the critical importance of these capabilities

- Make best use of data - including from Government and local authorities - to ensure that those who need essential digital skills can be identified and reached.

4. Lead from the front: employers taking responsibility for their own employees

10% of the UK workforce lack basic digital skills[10]. Employers should prioritise ensuring that 100% of their staff have basic digital skills, and work towards achieving this goal. This is critical as technology continues to change the nature of work and the type of job roles available. We need to think about the future of work now - the future jobs and the future workers.

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[10] Source: Lloyds Banking Group Consumer Digital Index, 2018

A number of influential reports, including from McKinsey[11], PricewaterhouseCoopers[12] and the World Economic Forum[13] have reinforced the importance of basic digital skills for the future of work, both for roles that will change and for new roles. The same reports suggest that social and emotional skills will need to develop hand-in-hand with digital skills, again highlighting the importance of building the confidence and resilience to thrive in the digital world.

We need to:
- Promote and celebrate role model employers - those who have 100% of their staff with basic digital skills or have a plan to get there - and encourage other employers to follow their lead

- Understand the basic digital skills needs of those employees likely to be displaced by automation and agree with employers how best to support these needs

- Encourage employers to support basic digital skills not only through Corporate Social Responsibility but also as part of 'business as usual'

- Ensure that employers have access to high quality online basic digital skills learning resources for their employees content available to employers

- Make best use of resources already produced by role model employers, including successful employee-based digital champion volunteering approaches.

5. Make it affordable: ensure no-one is denied access to the digital world because of their personal income

15% of non-users of the internet cite cost as the main reason they are not online[14]. Amongst those aged 16-64, 19% identify the cost of the equipment or devices as the key barrier, and 12% state connectivity stops them getting online[15]. The cost of being online also can exclude children: currently 700,000 11-18 year olds are without home access to the internet.[16]

No-one should be left behind because they can't afford to access the internet. Equally, it is unacceptable that so many school age children do not have internet access at home to support their studies.

Both Government and the private sector are active in increasing access to the internet, but the time is right for a more ambitious approach. We should consider the case for free internet access for those who cannot afford to pay for it. This could be achieved through collaboration between Government, private sector organisations and charities. Providers of devices and broadband have an important role to play, but so do many other types of organisation.

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[11] Source: McKinsey and Co, Skill Shift: Automation and the future of the workforce, 2018
[12] Source: PwC, Workforce of the future: The competing forces shaping 2030, 2018
[13] Source: World Economic Forum, The Future of Jobs Report, 2018
[14] Source: Ofcom's 2018 Adult's Media Use and Attitudes Report
[15] Source: Ofcom's 2018 Adult's Media Use and Attitudes Report
[16] Source: Lloyds Banking Group Consumer Digital Index, 2018

We need to:
- Consider how to increase access to the internet for people who cannot afford to pay for it, working across Government, the private sector and the social sector

- Within this, focus in particular on ensuring all school age children have access to the internet at home.

6. Make digital a social priority: bring social inclusion and digital inclusion together

Digital is increasingly fundamental for social change. We know, for example, that digital exclusion compounds the poverty premium - the extra money that those experiencing poverty pay for goods and services[17].

Digital inclusion supports better social outcomes by helping people increase their confidence, self-efficacy and resilience. Equally, digital inclusion works best when it recognises and reflects individual needs, and helps people achieve outcomes that are relevant to their lives.

To reach 100% of the UK population and help them benefit from the digital world, we need to bring digital inclusion and social inclusion together. Digital inclusion should be embedded within all major social and health programmes, across both design and delivery. In Jobcentres, at your GP, when engaging with Councils or charities, and when using Government services, digital inclusion should be used as a pathway to better social outcomes.

We need to:
- Ensure all policymakers in national and local Government are actively embedding digital inclusion in the design and delivery of services

- Ensure there is a champion for this approach in every Government Department

- Ensure private sector organisations investing in digital skills - both through Corporate Social Responsibility and through 'business as usual' - as well as charities large and small, are embedding digital inclusion in programme design and delivery

- Promote and celebrate role model organisations and initiatives across all sectors that show how better social outcomes have been achieved by embedding digital inclusion in the design and delivery of programmes and services.

Good Things Foundation invites you to join us in creating a 100% digitally included nation.

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[17] Source: University of Bristol 2016: Paying to be Poor

The following have pledged their support to a 100% digitally included nation:

[TO ADD LOGOS FOR THE ORGANISATIONS WHO HAVE PLEDGED]