Digital Motivation: Exploring the reasons people are offline

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Rationale

The main measures of the scale of digital exclusion in the UK (from ONS, Ofcom and Lloyds Banking Group) show a slowing in the rate of progress in people moving online and gaining basic digital skills. In 2018, the Lloyds Consumer Digital Index shows that 11.3 million people lack at least one basic digital skill; and separate research from Good Things Foundation and CEBR suggests that at current rates of progress, 6.9 million people will still lack digital skills by 2028.

For some time, the key barriers associated with digital exclusion have been understood in UK policy and practice as:

- The basic/essential digital skills gap;
- A lack of access to a connection and/or device;
- The motivational barriers preventing people from engaging.

The motivation - or willingness - to engage with and use digital technology has been explored through a variety of research and data projects, interventions and evaluations in the UK, but although it is recognised as a key issue and unpacked to some extent, it has not yet been investigated in depth in its own right.

Of the three core barriers to digital inclusion, motivation is underlined in research as the most significant in terms of the number of people affected, and the most persistent and hard to address. But while current research identifies a lack of motivation/interest and a lack of trust as the most significant reasons given by large numbers of people for not engaging with the internet, these categories are not broken down at a more granular level, exploring the specific personal/contextual reasons people have for being offline.

Furthermore, evidence suggests that those remaining offline are those in greatest need. Digital exclusion and social exclusion are closely related, and the recent slowing in the rate of national progress in digital inclusion suggests that those remaining offline are facing the highest levels of social exclusion. Increasingly, we will need to build on current best practice to develop even more engaging and effective ways of reaching and supporting those who face very real barriers in their lives.

We believe it is critical to understand in even greater depth why people are offline. Without this understanding, we cannot shape the future approaches and interventions required to help those in greatest need benefit from the digital world.

Research aim

Since August 2018, Good Things Foundation, Professor Simeon Yates (University of Liverpool) and BT have been working in partnership to conduct research into the reasons why 6.3m people do not engage with the internet (‘non-users’).

The primary purpose is:

To better understand the specific reasons people in the UK give for being offline, in greater depth and granularity than currently available research.
Research questions

To achieve this aim, the research has focused on answering the following key research questions:

1. What are the specific reasons people have for not engaging with the internet, below the level of ‘motivation’ or ‘trust’?

2. How do these specific reasons vary by demographic (eg. unemployment, low skills, age), and which reasons are most important for different groups?

3. To what extent are the reasons people give for being offline ‘masking’ other/deeper reasons or issues, including the role of proxy users?

Research scope and method

To answer the questions, the research was structured and carried out as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Method</th>
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<tr>
<td>Non users (scale and characteristics)</td>
<td>Ofcom data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headline reasons for not using</td>
<td>Ofcom data analysis + literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who gives what reasons?</td>
<td>Ofcom data analysis + literature review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More granular reasons</td>
<td>Literature review + interviews (to be done still)</td>
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Literature review

The purpose of the literature review has been to ensure robust understanding of what is already known from existing research and data studies, looking across both academia and digital inclusion projects/research, including those carried out by Good Things Foundation. The literature review also helped to steer analysis of Ofcom data.
Quantitative analysis of Ofcom data

Working with Professor Simeon Yates from the University of Liverpool, Good Things Foundation has analysed the raw data from Ofcom’s Media Literacy Survey 2017. This is the same survey data used to produce the Adults’ Media Use and Attitudes Report 2018.

Analysis has been informed by the literature review; and both elements of work have helped us develop headline groups and personas which will guide the recruitment of interviewees for the final phase of the research.

Interviewing learners at Online Centres

The third and final phase of this research will involve speaking with people who experience some or all of the motivational barriers identified through the research to date. Through these interviews, Good Things Foundation will explore motivational barriers to being online in even greater depth and granularity, including the relative importance of different barriers and the extent to which they ‘mask’ other/deeper reasons or issues.

At the time of writing, these interviews have yet to take place. Findings will be included in the final research report due for publication in December. As such, the personas included in this document are for illustrative purposes only.
Chapter 2
Key findings and recommendations

Motivation: four main groups

We have identified four main groups of people in terms of the reasons and barriers they describe for not being online. They are:

1) It’s not for me

These are non-users who state the internet is not for them or people like me do not see the personal benefit in being online. They have had no real need or purpose to go online meaning they do not see how the internet can add value to their current situation. Some people within this group also have an underlying fear of using the internet.

- 3 out of 5 non-users (61%) fit this profile;
- 1 in 14 people (7.4%) in the adult population are non-users fitting this profile.

2) The support I need is not available to me

Another barrier to bringing non-users online is the fact that some non-users report they do not have the right support. This could be access to the support they feel they need in order to get online or the actual devices required to do this.

- 1 in 4 non-users (25%) fit this profile;
- 1 in 32 people (3.1%) in the adult population are non-users fitting this profile.

3) It’s too complicated

An alternative reason non-users cite for being offline is that the internet is too complicated for them but this may be used to mask their own abilities if they do not have the skills to go online. These are not just the basic digital skills but also an understanding of how the internet works along with the critical skills to judge digital content so users can protect themselves when using the internet.

- 1 in 5 of non-users (22%) fit this profile;
- 1 in 37 people (2.7%) in the adult population are non-users fitting this profile.

4) The cost of going online is too much for me

The final barrier identified for non-users in this research is the cost of accessing the internet. This is related to the affordability of devices as well as connection costs for running these devices.

- 1 in 7 of non-users (15%) fit this profile;
- 1 in 50 people (1.8%) in the adult population are non-users fitting this profile.

It is important to note that these are not distinct groups and people may fall into more than one.

Focus on those saying ‘it’s not for me’

The largest group in the data was those saying ‘it’s not for me’. It was also the group in which the strongest predictive links existed with people’s demographics and circumstances.

Our analysis of the Ofcom data has revealed that:

- Those who left education at or under 16 years are 2.8 times more likely to be non-users saying ‘it’s not for me’ than those who left education after 21
- Each child in the house makes you 1.7 times less likely to be a non-user saying ‘it’s not for me’
- Those who are not “very” confident about their literacy are 2.4 times more likely to be non-users saying ‘it’s not for me’
- Those in NRS social grades D & E are 3.2 times more likely to be non-users saying ‘it’s not for me’ than those in social grades A & B

More detail on this group of people, along with the other motivational barriers, can be found later on in the report.
Non-users

As well as focusing on the motivational barriers of non-users, our analysis uncovers some headlines about non-users in general:

- 12% of UK adults do not go online currently (non-users) (Ofcom, 2018)
- This equates to approximately 6.3m people (applied to ONS’ Mid year population estimate, 2018)
- Non-users are now increasingly synonymous with those saying “the internet is not for me” or “it’s not safe”, rather than more tangible barriers such as a lack of skills or available equipment.

Moreover, the **six most reliable indicators** of whether someone is a non-user of the internet are:

- The age at which people leave full-time education
- The presence of children in their home
- Their level of confidence with reading and writing - i.e. general literacy
- Their income
- Their social grade (according to the NRS classification)
- Their age

It’s worth noting that age itself is not necessarily a predictor of non-use. Many of the other indicators correspond with age, but are more reliable predictors on their own.

More specifically:

- Those who left education at or under 16 years are **4 times more likely** to be non-users than those who left education after 21
- Each child in the house makes you **1.2 times less likely** to be a non-user
- Those who are not “very” confident about their literacy are **3.5 times more likely** to be non-users
- Those earning less than £10,399 pa are **2.3 times more likely** to be non-users than those earning over £52,000 pa
- Those in NRS social grades D & E are **3.5 times more likely** to be non-users than those in social grades A & B

Headline recommendations

**We need to tackle digital motivational barriers head on and develop models that understand people**

To continue to make progress in reducing digital exclusion, and help as many people as possible to benefit from the digital world, the design of digital inclusion interventions increasingly needs to take account of deep insight in what drives and stops behaviour change. This report aims to create new evidence in this space that can be useful for everyone committing to support digital inclusion, from Government to private sector employers to third sector organisations.

**We need to ensure that good data on digital motivation is being collected through both existing and new research and data projects**

Many current research and data reports contain invaluable data on digital motivation. There is scope to use these - and develop new approaches - to collect even more data that reveals and explores reasons for being offline. Developing more dedicated surveys that focus directly on non-users and limited users may also help by boosting sample sizes, creating data that is even more meaningful.

**Social inclusion and digital inclusion should be brought together**

This report demonstrates again the powerful link between digital exclusion and different dimensions of social exclusion. 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. This research therefore underlines again the case for embedding digital inclusion in all types of social support programme, whether public, private or community sector.

**We need to make better use of predictive analysis to describe need and target interventions**

Moving forward, there is a strong case to use big data and predictive analysis to focus on specific risk factors (rather than ‘general deprivation’) to describe need and target digital inclusion interventions. Examples of this include using the ‘Education’ domain of the Index of Multiple Deprivation, as this aligns strongly with the predictive indicators identified in this report.
Chapter 3

Context

Digital exclusion in numbers

Going online

- 12% of UK adults do not go online at all and this hasn’t changed since 201
- 63% of non-users say nothing would encourage them to go online in the next 12 months
- 84% of non-users aged 60 or over say ‘nothing’ could motivate them to get online

Basic / essential digital skills

The Lloyds Consumer Digital Index tells us about those without all (or any) basic digital skills. The number of those without these skills has been decreasing since 2015, but we are now seeing a slowing in the rate of this decrease. This can be summarised as follows:

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Without all 5 basic digital skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people without all 5 basic digital skills</td>
<td>12.6m</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>11.5m</td>
<td>11.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people without all 5 basic digital skills</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Without any basic digital skills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people without any basic digital skills</td>
<td>5.5m</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>4.9m</td>
<td>4.3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of people without any basic digital skills</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People who have never used the internet

The ONS Internet Users Survey reports on those who have never used the internet, as well as those who are referred to as ‘lapsed users’ (a previous internet user who hasn’t been online in the preceding three months). The following chart shows how the proportion of people in these groups have changed:

A note on comparisons

It is worth noting that the Ofcom definition of non-users incorporates lapsed users as well those who have never used the internet. This is why the figure for non-users is slightly higher than the ONS figure for people that have never used the internet. The Lloyds figure for those who do not have any of the basic digital skills in broadly in line with the ONS figure for those that have never used, as might be expected. All three of these measures (ONS, Ofcom and Lloyds Banking Group) use separate surveys and definitions of ‘offline’, and data are collected independently. It is, therefore, totally expected that the figures do not match up exactly.
Chapter 4

Motivational barriers in depth

1. Not for me

**Definition: It’s not for them or it’s not safe**

Non-users who state the internet is not for them or people like me do not see the personal benefit in being online. They have had no real need or purpose to go online meaning they do not see how the internet can add value to their current situation. In order for this group to feel motivated towards going online, the personal relevance needs to be made explicit at an individual level.

Some people within this group also have an underlying fear of using the internet. The Ofcom data enforces previous research that individuals feel wary due to misconceptions or lack of knowledge such as understanding how their content can be shared along with an awareness of who uses their data and shares their details online. By staying offline, they may also feel they avoid the risk of a negative experience like being exposed to hateful content or falling victim to fraud online.

**Who is affected by this?**

52% of non-users say they don’t go online because ‘they don’t see the need/being online is not for people like them’. Interestingly, over half of non-users in Oxford Internet Survey back in 2013 also expressed fears about the internet or technology showing this barrier is still significant in the non-user population.

This is particularly the case among individuals with negative attitudes towards digital and older non-internet users, especially those aged 65+. This lack of perceived value highly correlates with age but it does not correlate with social grade and education level as all education levels indicated a lack of interest as the most important reason for being offline.

However, previous research has shown that low education, as well as experiences across the life course, are significant for predicting attitudes towards learning and digital use. Lower levels of education also correlates with the lack of workplace computer use meaning older generations are more likely to have received fewer years of education as well as opportunities to learn digital skills across their life course. This explains why people with both of these characteristics are most likely to use this reason to explain their digital inactivity.

**Deeper reasons**

Having the motivation to learn digital skills can be shaped by the attitudes people hold towards informal learning in adult life. Tuckett and Field identified the factors that underpin these attitudes are the “experience and expectations of family, the extent of initial education, expectations and opportunities experienced in the workplace and, age and life stage”.

Within their research it is clear those who are either in lower social classes, have lower educational attainment or lower levels of literacy are most likely to hold negative attitudes towards learning. Our previous research corroborates their findings as these attributes are the most influential in relation to participating in adult learning, even if that is learning digital skills.

Despite this, people with fewer years of education are actually more likely to be offline by choice but they will mention lack of interest or cost to explain their behaviour. Previous research from Good Things Foundation found this lack of interest “may obscure an underlying lack of confidence, or arise from misinformation about the risks and benefits of the internet” so these barriers provided could be masking issues surrounding a person’s self-efficacy and their capabilities.
These negative beliefs and attitudes towards learning and digital can be detrimental to an individual’s self-efficacy as those that say they have no interest, also lack the skills to engage as they have a basic level of education. These beliefs may constrain a person’s abilities, or might have been developed as a way of rationalising low skills. This lack of self-efficacy can be a serious hindrance to older people in particular as they will avoid adopting digital technology if they feel they are not equipped to do so.

In comparison to ex-users, non-users are more likely to point to a lack of interest and skills as the reason for being offline but they also report a wider variety of reasons for non-use. One of these reasons being they have made an informed choice to disengage based on preferences and need.

For people who have internet access in their home but do not use the internet, they are more likely to be offline based on this informed ‘choice’ rather than because of a lack of interest or skills. Survey data reveals older people tend to have preference to do things offline with pen and paper so they do not have the desire to use digital. This may also indicate that older people have certain needs that digital cannot reproduce, such as the face-to-face social interaction of going to the shops, and supporting local employers and employees which may be related to isolation experienced in older age. For people who voluntarily exclude themselves from digital, digital is a means to an end and people are able to achieve these ends in other ways. Our previous research has shown that as long as people have “good social resources and little need for health and public services” this ‘informed choice’ is not problematic and little can be done to persuade this small proportion online.

Proxy use

Existing research shows proxy use exists across all groups of non-users for various reasons. Proxies can be used in multiple ways such as buying online, accessing information, accessing public services, claiming benefit and getting in touch with someone. Yet, it is more often associated with intermittent transactional activities than with activities that are perceived as less formal and ‘risky’.

For non-users within this group it is more likely proxies are used to fulfil these transactional activities as well as ‘riskier’ tasks due to the underlying fear for non-users in this group. As internet users aged 55 and over are less likely to have done riskier transactional activities online such as online banking or shopping, non-users who cite the internet is ‘not for them’ may use proxies as their method for addressing this underlying fear or perception of risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I say...</th>
<th>What I might mean...</th>
<th>Who am I?</th>
<th>What will help me...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s not for me</td>
<td>I do not have the ability or skills to understand how to use the internet</td>
<td>Low education Low confidence in literacy abilities Social class D &amp; E Over 65</td>
<td>Basic digital support that teaches me how to use a computer and the internet but is tailored to my needs</td>
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</table>

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<tr>
<th>I say...</th>
<th>What I might mean...</th>
<th>Who am I?</th>
<th>What will help me...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s not for me</td>
<td>I do not trust the internet and I am fearful of how companies may use my personal details</td>
<td>Unskilled work Low confidence in literacy abilities Over 55</td>
<td>Impartial advice that informs me on how to stay safe online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Support

**Definition:** They don’t have the right help to know where to start or they don’t have the kit

Another barrier to bringing non-users online is the fact that some non-users report they do not have the right support. This could be access to the support they feel they need in order to get online or the actual devices required to do this. The support non-users need will relate to setting up digital technology to having someone available to teach them basic digital skills although this will vary between each user and their needs. For some users this support might even be having someone nearby while they use devices so they can feel reassured as they start to build their confidence in using the internet.

**Who is affected by this?**

Like those who say the internet is ‘not for me’, non-users who sit within the older age bracket, have low education and confidence in their literacy skills are most likely to fall within this group.

The Ofcom Media Literacy Survey data reveals that each additional child within a household makes someone 1.678 times less likely to be a non-user meaning those who live alone are most likely to be a non-user and possibly feel as though they do not have the support to help them get online. Despite this, if individuals have a strong support network from family, friends and close neighbours, living alone may not have a strong influence over their non-use. Feeling as though support is non-existent will stem from the feeling of being isolated rather than living in isolation itself.

**Deeper reasons**

Although social isolation has an impact on non-use due to the lack of support, previous research has shown those who are lonely mention a lack of access more often as a reason for disengagement rather than a lack of interest and support. Yet even if the correct equipment was provided to solve the problem of access, this may only solve part of the problem.

For isolated non-users with lower levels of education, they might not admit they need support out of pride and state they don’t have access to mask their limited skills. Whereas for non-users who say they don’t have the support they need to get online, this could be a reflection of their self-efficacy. These learners may have the skills but not the confidence to get started so feel they need additional support. Where a non-user has basic literacy, more years of education and are interested in learning, it is likely they may see less emphasis on support as they have the self confidence to get started without being reliant on someone else.

It is important to note than even where support is available, for people with additional needs such as learning difficulties this might not be the right type of support for their needs. Therefore, the demand for support might not come from those who are most excluded.

**Proxy use**

Our previous research found social networks play a big role in participants’ awareness and usage of digital technology as potentially risky situations can be turned over to trusted family members. Yet having support readily available can also be a hindrance to people wanting to learn.

Proxy use is more likely to occur among internet non-users with ‘larger socializing networks and stronger intergenerational support’. Our research has shown that when support is available, family members often take control of devices and complete the task themselves as this is more convenient for both parties which removes the prospect of the non-user becoming online.
For some non-users, this interaction justifies their position for being offline. Non-users can become reliant on proxies if they have no motivation to learn and the support offered does not incorporate teaching basic digital skills. This being said, proxy use could also be the catalyst for motivating non-users to go online as they do not want to be reliant on other people.

Although proxy use for this group tends to be intermittent rather than continuous this is due to a lack of time, patience, lack of interest and confidence, emphasising support from proxies would not be enough to motivate this group to become digitally active. Individuals need to have a positive outlook on their own abilities and digital in order to even consider seeking the right support that will help them to get online.

### Personas

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>I say...</th>
<th>What I might mean...</th>
<th>Who am I?</th>
<th>What will help me...</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| I don’t have the right support | I don’t have the skills so my family do it all for me | Low education  
Over 55  
Low confidence in literacy abilities  
Lives with family members | Patience and support from my family that shows me how to use the device in our household |
| I don’t have the right device | I have a smartphone | Low education  
Low confidence in literacy abilities  
Over 55  
Lives alone | Ongoing support from my family that shows me what I can do on my smartphone |

### 3. Complicated

**Definition: Getting online/connected or using the internet is too hard**

An alternative reason non-users cite for being offline is that the internet is too complicated for them but this may be used to mask their own abilities if they do not have the skills to go online. These are not just the basic digital skills but also an understanding of how the internet works along with the critical skills to judge digital content so users can protect themselves when using the internet. They have a perception that it is complicated and beyond their reach as they are uncertain on where to start. As with anything new, it can seem overwhelming to an individual so this group do not feel motivated to learn.

**Who is affected?**

Non-users are most likely to point to a lack of skill and access as factors for digital exclusion compared to ex-users. This group again consists of predominantly older people but with a large percentage being in low skilled work, D & E households and having had fewer years of education.

From the Ofcom data, over-54s and D & E households are more likely than average to describe themselves as ‘not confident’ in their literacy abilities emphasising self-efficacy is again problematic for people with these characteristics.
The Ofcom report reveals that D & E households are the most likely to feel the internet is too complicated and are most at risk of being offline. Individuals within D & E households are likely to be time poor whereby they are unable to dedicate time to learning as they are constantly working. As low literacy and education highly correlates with these individuals, they lack the critical skills needed online so are unable to protect themselves such as an awareness of how personal data is used and what personal data is acceptable to share. Individuals need the technical navigation skills so they can make informed decisions about what is safe, what is beneficial and how they can recognise reliable sources. Without this they are increasingly more vulnerable and are at risk of becoming exploited.

**Deeper reasons**

From the data, it is clear that employment status impacts the motivations of non-users to learn digital skills.

Some non-users that are in unskilled jobs or roles that do not make use of digital, use this lack of computer use in the workplace to explain their current digital behaviour. Evidence on learner motivation suggests that employees in these positions with low education and literacy levels have neither the desire to learn new skills even if this would improve their labour market position:

> “Participation in adult education is lowest amongst those with the poorest skills. This may suggest that adults with poor literacy and numeracy do not think that they need to improve their skills in the first place or perhaps that the adult education solutions that are on offer aren’t the ‘right’ kind for many people within this population”

Surprisingly, ex-users with low educational levels are less likely to indicate that a lack of skills is a reason for not using the internet. Blank and Dutton identify that the internet is an ‘experience technology’ so users become increasingly confident as they use the internet, regardless of education level. For non-users who feel it is too complicated, the internet needs to be introduced in small segments to prevent individuals feeling overwhelmed. Gaining basic skills in proportions that work for the individual help to create positive incremental changes that remove the complications.

As mentioned previously, those that lacked interest also lacked the skills to engage demonstrating many of those who say the internet is ‘not for me’ will also fall within this group, particularly those in the oldest age group. This again relates to their fewer years of education but most importantly, their ‘fluid intelligence’ which can be summarised as:

> “The ability to apply logic or knowledge from other areas of experience to deal with new problems and situations - makes it especially difficult to learn a completely new skill. Retirement quickens the decline in cognitive functions as these begin to deteriorate through lack of use, memory, capacity to learn and self-perception.”

Although age itself is not a key predictor of non-use, the capacity to learn underpins why older people in particular feel it is too complicated. Yet the ability to learn is not limited to older non-users. People of working age will also feel it is too complicated due to level of literacy, experience with education and the type of work experienced over their lifetime.
Proxy use
Although people who are least proficient and feel the internet is too complicated are the least likely to seek support to improve their skills, asking a friend or family member to help with digital is more likely among people in D & E households and older users. This might be due to poor experiences in educational environments which leads individuals to seek informal support from friends and family but it is unclear what this support looks like.

It is possible that this group do not seek support to overcome their complications as the support they truly need is not available. Work from SCVO found access to support that develops basic digital skills is least available where it’s needed most explaining why D & E households turn to social networks for digital support.

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<th>I say...</th>
<th>What I might mean...</th>
<th>Who am I?</th>
<th>What will help me...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s too complicated</td>
<td>I don’t have the right skills and I’m unable to access support</td>
<td>Low education Low confidence in literacy abilities Over 55 Lives alone Has a long term illness</td>
<td>1 to 1 outreach support from volunteers or digital champions as I am unable to access support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
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<th>What I might mean...</th>
<th>Who am I?</th>
<th>What will help me...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s too complicated</td>
<td>I don’t enjoy learning</td>
<td>Low education Low confidence in literacy abilities Employed in low skill work Lives with family</td>
<td>Tailored but informal support that shows me how to do the activities I am interested in rather than focusing on digital skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Cost

**Definition: The equipment or going online is too expensive**

The final barrier identified for non-users in this research is the cost of accessing the internet. This is related to the affordability of devices as well as connection costs for running these devices.

**Who is affected?**

Current research has found ex-users are more likely than non-users to point to lack of access and high costs as reasons for not using the internet. Yet for the non-users who do report this trend to be disproportionately disadvantaged.

Cost is more of a concern for individuals with low income and households of lower social status where the cost of going online is a larger percentage of their disposable income, making it expensive for this group. The oldest and youngest non-users are most likely to mention this barrier, particularly those in the youngest age bracket who are not in work or have a lower level income.

These high costs are also more likely to be an issue for those who have low confidence in their literacy abilities, fewer years of education, are unemployed and those in D & E households as these variables are key predictors of income.

Interestingly, the affordability of internet connection and devices is an important factor for certain regions as 25% of adults in Scotland’s most deprived areas have reported that they do not use the internet (compared to Scotland’s national average of 16%). However, when analysing the Ofcom data, location and multiple deprivation variables were not significant for cost nor for the other motivational groups.
Deeper reasons

Unlike the other motivational barriers, the majority of individuals who say the internet is too expensive tend to do so simply because being online is too expensive for them. Although, people with negative opinions about ICT are more likely to indicate they are not using the internet due to costs suggesting they possibly do not see the value for money.

Existing research is yet to uncover underlying reasons why people provide this reason but if this was unpicked, we might be able to understand an individual's financial situation as well as personal circumstances that are prohibiting internet use. For some non-users who fall within this group, they may be in financial hardship and point of crisis where learning digital skills is simply not the right time.

Proxy use

There is little evidence to support how those with cost barriers make use of proxies to go online. As cost is related to access to devices or internet, at this stage in the research we can only assume from our own knowledge and previous research that this group of non-users utilise proxies in the same way as those who express the other motivational barriers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I say...</th>
<th>What I might mean...</th>
<th>Who am I?</th>
<th>What will help me...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It’s too expensive</td>
<td>I can't afford to buy a broadband package at home</td>
<td>Low education Low confidence in literacy abilities Long term health problem Unemployed</td>
<td>A cheaper broadband offer that meets my needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 5

Recommendations for approach

Not for me

Integrating basic skills provision into other learning activities can make the internet seem more attractive, as can increasing the diversity of provision. There is a need to downplay the digital element of being online and find the ‘hook’ so people see the personal relevance e.g. managing finances not digital skills.

Digital inclusion policy and practice should focus efforts on moments of transition and crisis, where people benefit from support services. Through a nudge approach, these can provide entry point into digital by making it relevant and integrated.

Helping older people to get online requires intensive, tailored support, and an open-ended time commitment, especially for those experiencing low confidence and facing multiple barriers and disadvantages.

To address the fear element, people need more informed but impartial advice on software, devices and connectivity otherwise they will drop out due to technical problems. As the internet is viewed as an ‘experience technology’ where trust grows with positive engagement, positive learning experiences need to be encouraged by using a nudge approach.

Responsibility also lies on both government and technology businesses to invest in new forms of public engagement and education to show the value of being online.

Motivational campaigns using mass media, backed by local organisations can have significant impact such as the BBC Second Chance campaign and the Skills for Life campaign. Outreach work, coupled with taster provision have been successful strategies to stimulate participation among disengaged groups in general learning activities.

Technology companies should also be transparent and accountable by adopting clear, terms and conditions that make explicit how services operate and how personal information is used. This would aid in addressing the wariness people have of the internet, particularly those with low literacy.

Support

Support needs to be based in a familiar, informal and accessible physical location with interpersonal support. The support should come from encouraging and informal volunteers/tutors combined with peer learning to effectively communicate the benefits of digital.

Having access to kit alone can be enough to motivate people to learn digital as they have a reason to learn. Yet support needs to be provided for those who have lower literacy abilities or self-efficacy to create a positive learning experience. Ongoing support is needed to support the development of the individual and enhance their current skill sets.

Complicated

Similarly for those who find they do not have the right support, individuals who feel the internet is too complicated needs to experience tailored 1-1 support. Again this support needs to be ongoing and aimed at increasing the understanding as well as skills of individuals. As people who provide this reason are most likely to be those most in need and most likely to avoid seeking support, outreach may be the most effective means of engaging this group.

Cost

As access is more problematic for D & E households, there needs to be affordable packages or devices for low income households. This moves the responsibility of addressing the cost barrier away from the individual or community organisations that provide support, and onto key players in the digital landscape such as technology companies or broadband providers.
Chapter 6
Limited users

Good Things Foundation’s ‘The Real Digital Divide?’ report, published in 2017, introduced a new model for analysing the scale and makeup of ‘limited users’ of the internet. This used the Ofcom data as well. Although we have not focused on these users particularly through this report, we have analysed the latest Ofcom data in the same way as above.

This shows stark similarities between the demographic / circumstantial traits of non-users, those saying ‘it’s not for me’ and limited users. It demonstrates that there is an inequality that persists into how people use the internet, not just between those that use and those that don’t. Furthermore, this may now be a potentially fluid space where people move between non- and limited-use.

More specifically:

• Those who left education at or under 16 years are 2.3 times more likely to be limited users than those who left education after 21

• Those who are not “very” confident about their literacy are 2.7 times more likely to be limited users than those that are

• Those earning less than £10,399 pa are 3.2 times more likely to be limited users than those earning over £52,000 pa
Chapter 7

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