

# Digital Inclusion Action Plan: A response from FutureDotNow

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Government has identified five population groups that would likely benefit greatly from digital inclusion initiatives, these are:

1. Low-income households
2. Older people
3. Disabled people
4. Unemployed and those seeking work
5. Young people

Do you agree with these five population groups?

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FutureDotNow recommends adding working age adults without the essential digital skills as an additional priority group.

Today, c.21 million (52%) working-age adults cannot complete all 20 Work tasks found in the Essential Digital Skills Framework\*. This is a critical skills gap that's holding back individual prosperity, business resilience and productivity, and economic growth.

The five population groups identified as likely to most benefit from digital inclusion represent the most excluded and require dedicated support. However, solely prioritising the need of these groups suggests the Action Plan aims to tackle digital *exclusion*, rather than lean into the need to build a modern digital society in line with the Government's stated vision.

## INTERSECTIONALITY BETWEEN WORKING AGE ADULTS AND THE ACTION PLAN'S PRIORITY POPULATION GROUPS

There is significant intersectionality between working age adults and the five population groups identified by the government for priority action.

- **Young people**
  - Currently, 48% of 18-24-year-olds cannot complete all essential digital tasks for work.
  - Teachers are crucial to ensuring no young person leaves education without the essential digital skills for life and work, as set out in the Essential Digital Skills Framework. Currently almost half of those working in education (46%) are missing core work digital tasks.
  - Parents are also a critical community for supporting young people and are most likely to be of working age.

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- **Unemployed and those seeking work**

- Almost two thirds of working-age adults not in work (60%) cannot complete the 20 essential digital tasks. The Centre for Social Justice reports that unemployed adults are overwhelmingly more likely to be digitally excluded (22.2% v 3.8% for those in work).
- Essential digital skills are among those most critical to future employment potential for economically inactive adults, whether seeking work or not working due to ill health or disabilities. Tackling this digital skill gap is crucial to the Government's goal, set out in the Spring Statement, to support more people into work.

- **Disabled people**

- 62% of working-age adults with an impairment are unable to complete all 20 digital tasks for work.

- **Low-income households**

- 60% of adults with a personal income of less than £13,500 are unable to complete all 20 tasks. The same is true of 57% of those earning £13,500-£25,000. Emerging findings from FutureDotNow's work with the Centre for Economics and Business Research quantifying the economic impact of workforce digital skills show a significant potential earning uplift for those with improved essential digital skills.

- **Online safety and security**

- There is also notable overlap between a focus on working-age adults and the Action Plan's stated priorities around confidence and online safety. Safe use of the internet is essential for personal online protection, national security, and business resilience. Human error is the biggest risk to businesses and 35% of working age adults cannot complete all nine safety and security tasks in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

## IDENTIFYING NEED IN DIFFERENT COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

The Action Plan sets out the goal to 'identify where need is greatest' but it is not clear how the 'need' for activity to build digital inclusion in different groups will be identified or assessed. This risks a focus on closing the digital skills gap for those who have furthest distance to travel. Investment and action should also target opportunities that build 'a modern digital society and economy'.

Supercharging digital skills of the working-age population could yield disproportionately strong returns in terms of productivity, individual prosperity, and economic growth, in addition to creating a vital support network for more disadvantaged groups. Not proactively addressing the digital skills of working age adults is, therefore, currently a significant missed opportunity.

\*N.B. All data is taken from the 2024 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index, unless otherwise stated.

## Question 2

*Are there examples of digital inclusion initiatives that could be scaled up or replicated in other local communities? If known, please provide the name of the initiative, the organisation, a summary of what they do and contact details (if relevant).*

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### POWER OF CONVENING AROUND A CLEAR AMBITION AND GOAL

It's vital to support organisations to break out of silos, learn from best practice and not repeat mistakes. The existing model from FutureDotNow is having a proven impact. It's convening employers around a series of tangible goals to address systemic barriers (e.g. quantifying economic impact of the digital skills gap, mapping AI skills to the existing framework, unlocking the link to social value) using an agile sprint model. Industry representatives are working together often across competitive barriers and alongside their main job function. This central convening role allows us to pool knowledge, capacity and resources to drive collective action and impact.

The Digital Skills Roadmap, published by FutureDotNow in July 2023 highlighted five key approaches employers have successfully used to improve workforce digital capability. These models are based on the experiences of coalition members such as Marks and Spencer, Travis Perkins, Dorset Council, and Nationwide Building Society and set out different models of delivery for organisations of different sector, size and maturity of programme.

This model of shared best practice can be amplified by government, expanded to incorporate more local and public sector examples to scale up successful digital skills delivery and help promote this work as a collaborative, collective endeavour.

### OPENING DOORS TO FUNDING FOR COORDINATORS

Like many coordinating organisations, FutureDotNow has to generate funding to enable us to do our work. This comes primarily from industry and, in the current economic climate, is increasingly challenging.

FutureDotNow relies on a small community of Strategic Partners who provide us with invaluable financial support, strategic advice, advocacy, and pro-bono resources. We have also introduced an enhanced member offer, where organisations make a small contribution to core costs based on their organisation size, in return for access to enhanced resources to help them close the skills gap and opportunities to profile their impact.

Government endorsement of organisations like FutureDotNow and the important role we play cannot be under-estimated in helping open doors to funding and establishing more sustainable funding streams.

### WORKFORCE DIGITAL SKILLS CHARTER

[The Workforce Digital Skills Charter](#) is already uniting cross-sector organisations around a shared statement of ambition, calling for concerted and focused action to close the essential digital skills gap in the UK workforce. FutureDotNow is pleased to see the Action Plan recognise and commit to government promotion of the Charter.

We look forward to working with government to scale the Charter into industry. Direct government endorsement of the Charter, in its role as an employer, would also send a strong signal on the government's commitment to the broader workforce digital skills agenda.

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## LEARNING FROM INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

To deliver the government's vision of 'a modern digital society', it is important to identify examples from around the world on how different regions have built the core digital capability of their citizens and workers. This includes details on activities, investments, incentives, and the involved actors. For example, identifying leading regions in developing a tech-literate workforce.

## Question 3

*Are there examples of evaluation models for measuring the impact of digital inclusions programs that you are aware of? Please provide details of these models and where they have been used (if known).*

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### IMPORTANCE OF CLEAR AND CONSISTENT DATA POINTS IN MEASUREMENT

c.21 million working-age adults (52%) cannot complete all 20 work tasks in the Essential Digital Skills framework\*.

However, the Action Plan quotes 7.3 million (18%) working-age adults as lacking the Essential Digital Skills for Work. It is unclear why, historically, this data point was designed but 'having the EDS for Work' as set out in the Consumer Digital Index means an individual can complete at least one work task in each of the five skill areas of the Framework, out of a total of 20 tasks. These 7.3 million people might have proficiency in 19 of the 20 work tasks or may have as few as five. This definition and data point is unhelpful and misleading, masking the true extent of the digital skill gap in working-age adults.

Going forward, FutureDotNow recommends that the 'task view' of the data (i.e. c.21m are missing at least one of the 20 work tasks) should be THE data point used by all stakeholders to communicate the scale of the workforce essential digital skills gap, providing a clear rallying point for action.

### THE NEED FOR MEANINGFUL OBJECTIVES AND MEASURES

The stated priority to develop 'a robust suite of headline indicators' and the objective of 'measuring what works', in support of the Government's ambition that 'everyone... has the access, skills and confidence to participate in, and benefit from, a modern digital society and economy' is positive and welcomed. However, this must be supplemented by a clear and specific set of measurable goals; realistic but ambitious targets around which the wider community of actors can coalesce.

Without clear goals and SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) it's impossible to know what success looks like. This is especially critical for tackling large, complex and multi-dimensional challenges that require systematic and consistent action.

Mass mobilisation of multiple actors in common cause requires a single vision with one set of metrics against which everyone can measure progress. This will anchor and drive delivery and motivate specific action.

The DERI tool referenced in the case study is undoubtedly a helpful tool to identify where to target interventions but it speaks to understanding need, not measurement of impact.

### SETTING AMBITIOUS TARGETS

This work is essential for building a modern digital society and has the potential to deliver huge benefits to individuals, society and the economy. Targets and goals are important levers for driving the necessary action. A national ambition is required that reflects the scale of both the challenge in front of us and the opportunities on offer.

On skills, a bold statement on the imperative for everyone to be equipped with at least the skills in the Essential Digital Skills Framework is needed. This should be anchored to the

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current position (today 15% cannot complete Foundation tasks, 48% cannot complete tasks for Life, and 52% cannot complete tasks for Work) and the current improvement run rate (1-2% annually across all levels).

### **HARNESSING EFFORTS IN COMMON CAUSE**

Only the government can set a challenging national aspiration: a bold statement of national intent around which business, civil society and government can coalesce.

On essential digital skills, this could be relatively straightforward and anchored to the Essential Digital Skills Framework and measured by the Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index: everyone to have the skills in the Essential Digital Skills Framework by (e.g.) 2030 would act as a bold invitation to work in common cause on a collective mission.

The Government has a significant convening role and must set the national ambition, however it is not solely the job of government to develop or deliver the plan to get there.

\*N.B. All data is taken from the 2024 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index, unless otherwise stated.

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## Question 4

*In what ways could the government partner with industry, charities and community organisations to promote digital inclusion?*

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### THE ROLE OF INDUSTRY IN DIGITAL UPSKILLING

While the role of the private sector is mentioned throughout the action plan there is little to no mention of their role in training workers in essential digital skills. This represents a sizable, missed opportunity. Employers can and do have a role to play. Many are already delivering essential digital skills, both to deliver commercial objectives and to support community upskilling.

The Government must leverage its convening power to draw greater business attention to the digital skills challenge as a cross-sector issue. We recommend action to signal to all industry sectors that this is an issue that impacts them and one they can play a role in addressing.

The FutureDotNow coalition is a ready-made community of more than 250 leading organisations already engaged in the issue of tackling the essential digital skills gap in working-age adults, many actively working collectively on solutions to barriers to progress and new pathways to scale reach.

By leveraging the existing infrastructure and reputation of the FutureDotNow coalition, the government could send a clear signal to industry on the role of employers, the importance of cross-sector collaboration and provide a simple route for employers get involved. This would include promotion of the Workforce Digital Skills Charter, as set out in the Action Plan.

It's also worth considering the interdependencies between the public and private sectors, especially in areas with the biggest essential digital skill gaps (construction/infrastructure, medical). With significant challenges around both housebuilding and NHS performance, a government and private sector partnership to drive awareness of the mutual benefits of improving digital skills could have an outsize influence on the Government's highest priorities.

Industry bodies can also be a key avenue for influence. Often dedicating significant resources to understanding challenges and trends across their industry, their role in presenting and distributing information to their often large memberships, provides a clear opportunity for influencing the private sector at scale.

### NOT A TECH SECTOR PROBLEM TO SOLVE

Digital inclusion is not an issue that only impacts – or can be impacted by – the tech and telecommunications sectors. The industry pledges that accompany the action plan could inadvertently send the message that this is the case, or at least that it is the view of the Government.

Gaps in Essential Digital Skills for Work affect all industries (as reflected in Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index data). Active engagement with all sectors is necessary, especially those that experiences the biggest essential digital skills gap (e.g. construction, retail, medical).

### INCENTIVISING INDUSTRY ACTION

As well as the commercial benefits for business, it's also important to recognise the cost associated with training people in the essential digital skills. Enabling and incentivising skills delivery is also key.

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Allowing the Growth and Skills Levy to be used provide bite-size essential digital skills training and requiring all apprenticeships to incorporate upskilling on digital essentials regardless of discipline would immediately unlock significant business capacity.

The Action Plan commits to 'embed EDS concepts in apprenticeships and T-levels', but much greater clarity is needed for what this means in practice. A clear curriculum and specific, transparent targets are needed to systematically equip people with the core digital skills required for work, as set out in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

Qualifications, whilst not the route for everyone, are another route to action. Currently there is a lack of funded qualifications at lower levels, and this is acting a barrier to entry for some learners, and for training providers to support the needs of employers.

Opportunities include funding digital skills qualifications at lower levels (Entry 1 and Level 1), creating funded 'stepping stone' qualifications to provide a progression pathway for people with low levels of digital skills, and funding a Level 2 qualification to cover the workforce digital skills needed by employers. Finally, lifting the freeze on developing new qualifications (in place since 2020) would enable progress of many of the recommendations in the "No Longer Optional" report.

### **COALESCING AROUND THE SOCIAL VALUE ACT**

Following the publication of the new National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) in February 2025, FutureDotNow has identified considerable, yet untapped, potential to utilise social value procurement requirements to promote systematic, cross-sector initiatives aimed at addressing digital inclusion. FutureDotNow is leading work to develop guidance for both commissioners and suppliers to turn the opportunity into a set of tangible actions.

Targeting social value interventions to improve digital inclusion will help drive cross-sector action to support people of all ages to build the skills and confidence they need to fully participate in an increasingly digital world, and at the same time drive more investment in providing access to connectivity and devices.

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## Question 5

*How can the government ensure the Digital Inclusion Innovation Fund best supports local communities across the UK?*

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### **LOCAL GROWTH PLANS SHOWING LEADERSHIP**

Requiring local growth plans to incorporate digital inclusion and building essential digital skills in citizens and workers as specific objectives could unlock significant regional capacity, driving activity by local and combined authorities. This would incentivise local partnerships and delivery that would contribute to an ambitious national agenda and targets.

### **NATIONAL GOALS TO DRIVE IMPACTFUL LOCAL DELIVERY**

Community delivery and learning from local success is crucial and the distribution of the Innovation Fund should reflect this. However, a strategy focused on locally designed and delivered interventions risks significant inefficiency. Action must be coordinated against a set of clear and specific national goals to ensure meaningful progress and avoid duplication of effort and wasted funds across multiple locations.

### **LOCAL ISN'T JUST PLACE**

The Action Plan appears to equate 'local' (i.e. reaching people where they are) with place/geography. This represents a potential missed opportunity to reach people through other key channels, such as their employer or other trusted parties, which can include businesses. There is a case for broadening the definition of 'local delivery' to include other key avenues through which individuals can be reached at scale, including individual employers and key sectors (e.g. retail, construction).

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF COORDINATION AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Organisations like Good Things Foundation and FutureDotNow are already playing a critical role in coordinating and convening action with industry and the third sector (nationally and locally).

Large scale, systematic collection of data and best practice, requires appropriate resources. However, working with existing organisations with experience in this area would allow government to efficiently supercharge further activity, setting up local delivery for evidence-based success.

This would also mitigate the fragility of local infrastructure. Committed community groups deliver significant impact, but the siloed nature of this delivery creates a 'postcode lottery' for available funding and the services available to individuals.

The intent to ensure action on digital inclusion across the U.K. is laudable but achieving this requires coordinated investment in the infrastructure required to scale successful delivery and mobilise national action.

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### Question 6

*The government has identified four focus areas for how it will drive up digital inclusion, these are:*

- a. Opening up opportunities through skills*
- b. Tackling data and device poverty*
- c. Breaking down barriers to digital services*
- d. Building confidence*

*Do you agree with these four focus areas?*

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Yes, however in moving forward with these areas of focus, attention should not be solely concentrated on the needs of those who are most digitally excluded. Similar levels of attention are needed on building the digital capabilities across different communities in line with the ambition '*for everyone to have the access, skills and confidence to participate in, and benefit from, a modern digital society and economy*'.

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## Question 7

Please refer to the objectives in the Action Plan document. Has the government identified the right objectives for each focus area?

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### Focus area 1: Opening up opportunities through skills

While the overarching objective of the Opening up opportunities through skills focus area is sound, it is established with a data point that masks the true extent of the digital skills gap in working-age adults.

c.21 million working-age adults (52%) cannot complete all 20 work tasks in the Essential Digital Skills framework\*. However, the Action Plan quotes 7.3 million (18%) working-age adults as lacking the Essential Digital Skills for Work. It is unclear why, historically, this data point was designed but 'having the EDS for Work' as set out in the Consumer Digital Index means an individual can complete at least one work task in each of the five skill areas of the Framework, out of a total of 20 tasks. These 7.3 million people might have proficiency in 19 of the 20 work tasks or may have as few as five. This definition and data point is unhelpful and misleading, masking the true extent of the digital skill gap in the working-age adults.

FutureDotNow recommends that, going forward, the 'task view' of the data (i.e. c.21m are missing at least of the 20 work tasks) should be the easy-to-understand data point used by all stakeholders to communicate the scale of the workforce essential digital skills gap, providing a clear rallying point for action.

### ACTION PLAN OBJECTIVES

**Objective 1: providing the right digital skills through relevant training**

**Objective 2: facilitating access to skills support for everyone, regardless of circumstance**

**Objective 3: making sure upskilling enables people to realise the wider benefits of being online**

To ensure the above objectives can be met in measurable ways and at scale requires both clear definition of the skills required and specific targets around which action can be coalesced.

### CLEAR DEFINITION: ADOPT ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS FRAMEWORK AS NATIONAL BASELINE

The existing Essential Digital Skills Framework has been validated by government and industry. FutureDotNow welcomes the Government's commitment to 'enhance support of the framework' and the recognition of the importance of 'cross-governmental sponsorship of the framework'. The Action Plan also commits the Government Skills Unit and GDS to seeking the integration of 'the current and future EDS Frameworks into the core skills curriculum for the Civil Service'. However, sponsorship and enhanced support does not necessarily equate to ownership.

FutureDotNow strongly recommends that Government be the ultimate custodian of the Essential Digital Skills Framework, as both a national framework and digital skills baseline for the UK population. Government can then work with key stakeholders to ensure it remains relevant, keeping up with advancing tech.

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Owning the framework and setting an ambition to bring citizens up to a clear national baseline will provide a focal point for government and business and enable government to accurately report on national progress.

## **CLEAR MEASURES AND TARGETS**

The Essential Digital Skills Framework must be supplemented by a clear and specific set of measurable goals; realistic but ambitious targets around which the wider community of actors can coalesce.

Mass mobilisation of multiple actors in common cause requires a single vision with one set of metrics against which everyone can measure progress. This will anchor and drive delivery and motivate specific action. Without clear goals and SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) it's impossible to know what success looks like. This is especially critical for tackling large, complex and multi-dimensional challenges that require systematic and consistent action.

A bold statement on the imperative for everyone to be equipped with at least the skills in the Essential Digital Skills Framework is needed. This should be anchored to the current position (today 15% cannot complete Foundation tasks, 48% cannot complete tasks for Life, and 52% cannot complete tasks for Work) and the current improvement run rate (1-2% p/a across all levels).

### **Objective 4: everyone should leave school with digital skills**

We welcome explicit recognition of the need for young people to leave formal education with the skills to 'benefit from and stay safe in the online world'. However, clarity is needed on what the baseline of these skills are. A coherence in language across the skills required at all life stages will allow for consistent delivery, objective setting and measurement.

FutureDotNow's work with business shows strong support for the Essential Digital Skills Framework being used as part of a minimum digital skills baseline for those entering the workforce for the first time. This framework explicitly identifies nine tasks related to being safe and legal online and therefore provides a strong basis for supporting young people to get online safely.

### **Objective 5: adult digital skills training should be easily accessible and tailored to the changing needs of people and the economy**

We agree. For training to be accessible there needs to be a high degree of flexibility in how and when the content is consumed, recognising that many adults juggle significant demands on their time. The current EDS Qualifications require over 40 hours of learning, which our research tells us is at odds with how people want to learn and therefore acts as a significant barrier to uptake.

The role of employers is also key here; they are in a unique position to support employees to build essential digital skills by finding opportunities to embed learning into onboarding programmes, existing development programmes, and apprenticeships as well as finding light-touch ways to provide ongoing support to colleagues to embed these skills and grow in confidence. FutureDotNow has a growing bank of examples of approaches that employers are using, which can act as inspiration for others.

It is important to note that training is not without cost and allowing the Growth and Skills Levy to be used provide bite-size essential digital skills training and, for example requiring all apprenticeships to incorporate digital essentials regardless of discipline, would immediately unlock significant business capacity.

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## TAILORED TO CHANGING NEEDS: DEVELOPING A FUTURE-FIT FRAMEWORK

While the Essential Digital Skills Framework has been validated by both government and industry, it is critical to establish a regular review process to ensure it remains relevant and reflects the skills and tasks considered essential in shifting digital landscape.

Government ownership of the Framework and oversight of future updates is crucial to the broad adoption of the framework and maintaining its credibility.

Work is underway by FutureDotNow and the Alan Turing Institute, sponsored by DSIT, to explore how the Framework keeps pace with emerging tech by incorporating essential AI skills. Whilst this work will output with recommendations, establishing government ownership of the Framework and associated review process will be a vital step to making progress here.

Future updates to the Framework will have implications on the wider ecosystem such as training resources and qualifications, so including training providers, FE/HE colleges and awarding bodies in any consultation is encouraged.

FutureDotNow has convened a cross-industry team focused on the development opportunities for the framework, which offers a ready-made channel for consultation.

### **Objective 6: employers should proactively support employee upskilling**

There is both clear interest and motivation for industry to support the delivery of essential digital skills for work. The Government can leverage FutureDotNow's current work quantifying the business and social value case of upskilling, alongside existing engagement from industry, to create a step-change in action.

## THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF CLOSING THE WORKFORCE DIGITAL SKILLS GAP

Currently, the economic impacts of the digital skill gap are not well documented or part of formal national metrics. FutureDotNow is delighted to be working with DSIT to start to close this gap, as mentioned in the Action Plan.

Emerging data indicates a clear and growing business case for both government and industry action to close the essential digital skills gap in working-age adults.

Emerging findings from our work with the Centre for Economics and Business Research indicate significant uplift in output, earnings, and business profitability from closing the workforce digital skills gap.

## THE SOCIAL VALUE OF CLOSING THE WORKFORCE DIGITAL SKILLS GAP

Similarly, we are also pleased to be working with Sonnet Advisory and Impact to begin to close the gap in understanding of the social value of improved essential digital skills for work. Sponsored by DSIT, this early work is developing new insight on the wider benefits to society from uplifting digital skills.

Following the publication of the new National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) in February 2025, FutureDotNow has identified considerable, yet untapped, potential to utilise social value procurement requirements to promote systematic, cross-sector initiatives aimed at addressing the workforce digital skills gap. FutureDotNow is leading work to develop guidance for both commissioners and suppliers to turn the opportunity into a set of tangible actions.

Targeting social value interventions to improve digital inclusion will help to drive cross-sector action to support people of all ages to build the skills and confidence they need to fully participate in an increasingly digital world, and at the same time drive more investment in providing access to connectivity and devices.

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## **BUILDING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTION**

This greater insight into both the economic impact and social value of close the workforce digital skills gap will provide a powerful business case for both government and industry to take further action on skills delivery.

Together, these reports must be just the start of bringing a more systematic focus on the economic and social imperative for action on core digital skills for the UK workforce.

This new data can help inform investment decisions for both government and industry but it can also inform broader national awareness of the state of digital readiness in the UK and its implications.

FutureDotNow recommends urgent further action to set out detailed national measures on digital inclusion including digital skills growth, working in partnership with key bodies such as Skills England and ONS.

\*N.B. All data is taken from the 2024 Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index, unless otherwise stated.

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## **Focus area 2: Tackling data and device poverty**

We defer to experts such as Good Things Foundation.

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## **Focus area 3: Breaking down barriers to digital services**

No additional comments

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## **Focus area 4: Building confidence and supporting local delivery**

No additional comments

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## Question 8

Please refer to the next steps in the Digital Inclusion Action Plan document. Has the government identified the right medium and long-term next steps for 'each focus area'?

### Focus area 1: Opening up opportunities through skills

#### REGULAR APPRAISAL OF THE DIGITAL SKILLS NEEDED TO BENEFIT FROM BEING ONLINE

It is critical to establish a regular review process for the Essential Digital Skills Framework to ensure it remains relevant and reflects the skills and tasks considered essential in shifting digital landscape.

Government ownership of the Framework and oversight of future updates is crucial to the broad adoption of the framework and to maintaining its credibility.

Work is underway by FutureDotNow and the Alan Turing Institute, sponsored by DSIT, to explore how the Framework keeps pace with emerging tech by incorporating essential AI skills. Whilst this work will output with recommendations, establishing government ownership of the framework and associated review process will be a vital step to making progress here.

Future updates to the Framework will have implications on the wider ecosystem such as training resources and qualifications, so including training providers, FE/HE colleges and awarding bodies in any consultation is encouraged.

FutureDotNow has convened a cross-industry team focused on the development opportunities for the Framework, which offers a ready-made channel for consultation.

#### PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS ARE READY TO WORK IN A DIGITAL AGE

It is very encouraging to see the ambition to '*integrate current and future Essential Digital Skills Frameworks into the core skills curriculum for the Civil Service*'. FutureDotNow recommends government go one step further and make the Essential Digital Skills Framework the national digital skills baseline.

[The Workforce Digital Skills Charter](#) is already uniting cross-sector organisations around a shared statement of ambition, calling for concerted and focused action to close the essential digital skills gap in the UK workforce. FutureDotNow is pleased to see the Action Plan recognise and commit to government promotion of the Charter. Direct Government endorsement of the Charter in its role as an employer (e.g. all departments becoming Charter signatories and promoting their status), would also send a strong signal on the government's commitment to the broader workforce digital skills agenda.

#### YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING EDUCATION WITH THE NECESSARY DIGITAL SKILLS

We welcome explicit recognition of the need for young people to leave formal education with the skills to 'benefit from and stay safe in the online world'. However, clarity is needed on what the baseline of these skills are. A coherence in language across the skills required at all life stages will allow for consistent delivery, objective setting and measurement.

FutureDotNow's work with business shows strong support for the Essential Digital Skills Framework being used as part of a minimum digital skills baseline for those entering the workforce for the first time. The framework explicitly identifies nine tasks related to being safe and legal online and therefore provides a strong basis for supporting young people to get online safely.

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## IMPROVING THE ESSENTIAL DIGITAL SKILLS OFFER

For training to be accessible there needs to be a high degree of flexibility in how and when the content is consumed, recognising that many adults juggle significant demands on their time. The current Essential Digital Skills Qualifications (EDSQs) require over 40 hours of learning, which our research tells us is at odds with how people want to learn and therefore acts as a significant barrier to uptake.

The role of employers is also key here; they are in a unique position to support employees to build essential digital skills by finding opportunities to embed learning into onboarding programmes, existing development programmes, and apprenticeships as well as finding light-touch ways to provide ongoing support to colleagues to embed these skills and grow in confidence. FutureDotNow has a growing bank of examples of approaches that employers are using, which can act as inspiration for others.

It is important to note that training is not without cost and allowing the Growth and Skills Levy to be used provide bite-size essential digital skills training and, for example requiring all apprenticeships to incorporate digital essentials regardless of discipline, would immediately unlock significant business capacity.

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### Focus area 2: Tackling data and device poverty

We defer to experts such as Good Things Foundation.

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### Focus area 3: Breaking down barriers to digital services

No comments

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### Focus area 4: Building confidence and supporting local delivery

No comments

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## Question 9

*If you have any additional ideas on what government should be doing, please tell us more*

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### **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEW AND EXISTING BODIES AND STAKEHOLDERS**

The Action Plan comes co-signed by five Secretaries of State. FutureDotNow commends this level of cross-government support.

The Action Plan also sets out a number of governmental stakeholders and plans that will play a role in delivering and/or providing oversight of the plan, including the Digital Inclusion Action Committee (and sub-committees), Skills England and the Industrial Strategy. Other bodies not explicitly referred to in the Action Plan, such as the Digital Skills Council will also have a role to play.

FutureDotNow recommends that government provides clarity on the roles and responsibilities of each of these bodies, as well as how they will interact on this critical agenda of building a modern digital society and economy.

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