Digital Inclusion Ministerial Meeting, Isle of Man, 23 June 2017

DIGITAL INCLUSION: DEVELOPING DIGITAL SKILLS

Ministers are invited to:

- **Consider this paper produced by the work sector setting out:**
  - **the work currently taking place across Member Administrations to promote digital inclusion; and**
  - **the digital inclusion themes common to all Council jurisdictions which contribute to the development of digital skills: intergenerational working; young people and future skills; and working in partnerships**

- **Consider and discuss the issues raised by the presentations in the areas identified above**

- **Reaffirm the Council's commitment to ensure everyone has the opportunity to share in the benefits of technology and the internet**

- **Note that digital inclusion activities have contributed to improved economic, health and earning outcomes and agree that the potential for benefits in other policy areas should be explored**

- **Agree that digital skills and leadership across the public sector are vital in driving this agenda forward**

- **Note the commitment of the work sector to maintain links and collaboration with the Social Inclusion work sector where appropriate**

- **Agree that the Digital Inclusion work sector should continue, focusing on the common themes identified in Annex 1**

- **Agree that this paper be published on the Council's website and made available for interested stakeholders**

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Digital Inclusion: Developing Digital Skills

In November 2014, the British-Irish Council (BIC) agreed to support the continuation of the Digital Inclusion work sector. The Council recognised that, as the internet and technology became ever more pervasive in our communities, it was vital to ensure that the opportunities offered by digital were available to all.

There has been much progress in helping people to get online. Although definitions of digital inclusion vary across our administrations, there is broad consensus that the number of people who are included in the digital world has increased significantly over the past five years. The Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2017[1] shows that only 9% of over 18s in the UK are offline, which is a 2% improvement from 2016. There is evidence to show similar trends across all Member Administrations.

Our priorities may be different, reflecting the diversity of our communities, but the challenge of getting people online and continuing to develop their skills and confidence remains the same.

- The UK Government published its UK Digital Strategy in March 2017. It includes a chapter focused on digital skills and inclusion.
- Scotland's refreshed digital strategy was unveiled in March 2017 and sets out the vision for Scotland as a vibrant, inclusive, open and outward looking digital nation.
- The Welsh Government is supporting the digital inclusion of its citizens through the actions set out in the 2016 Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan, which includes the £1m per annum Digital Communities Wales programme.
- The Isle of Man Government is delivering its Digital Strategy which launched in 2015, and working with partners to support digital inclusion projects under the Digital Inclusion Strategy 2016-21.
- The Northern Ireland Assembly introduced a 'digital first' strategy in 2015, and is currently developing a digital transformation strategy and associated delivery plan.
- Jersey launched its Digital Policy Framework in February 2017 with a

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[1] http://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/lloyds-bank-consumer-digital-index-2017.pdf

commitment to digital skills for all.

- Ireland's National Digital Strategy (NDS) focuses on driving digital adoption in three key areas: enterprise, citizens and education. It includes support for digital entrepreneurship through the Digital Hub Development Agency and the National Digital Research Centre.
- The Guernsey Government published its 'Digital Sector Strategic Framework' in April 2017. Guernsey is supporting digital inclusion projects focused around skills, community and the economy.

Digital is increasingly becoming the preferred channel for service providers and users. Users want services that are easy to use and convenient, and service providers want to ensure their services are cheaper and more relevant to those using them. As the digital world is evolving, so are the needs of our communities. It is no longer enough that people have access to the internet and basic skills, they now need to ensure those skills are relevant and that they match the pace of change.

Since the Council's Digital Inclusion Ministers last met in 2014, the work sector has focused its activity on improving partnerships between public, voluntary and private sectors which support digital inclusion activities and improved digital literacy. This has included two mapping exercises to gauge the range and scope of activity in Member Administrations, including collaborative work within and across administrations. Members of the Digital Inclusion workstream have also met with social inclusion policy leads to explore areas of common ground.

Through this work the Digital Inclusion work sector has been able to identify three specific areas, common to all Member Administrations, where focused activity will be critical to the success of initiatives to address digital exclusion. Under the broad heading of 'Digital Skills', the group will focus on intergenerational working, young people and future skills, and working in partnerships.

These themes are closely connected. It is essential that as many people as possible are supported to develop their digital skills, from basic to more advanced. For

example, intergenerational learning can be an effective method of making sure that digital skills development happens. Similarly, as highlighted by all administrations in their strategies, partnership working across government and between the public, private and third sectors is key to promoting deep and widespread change.

Intergenerational working

Digital exclusion and barriers to getting online are largely experienced by older people. Digital skills can help to address poverty, social isolation, and health issues, and can enable those affected to live more independent lives. Research indicates that, while 71% of adults over 65 are using the internet (an improvement of 3% since 2016)[2], individuals in this age group remain less likely to access the internet than younger age groups even though older groups are the most likely to benefit from the take up of new technologies. This research also estimates that digitally capable people are £444 better off per year, through using discount and cashback sites. The UK Office for National Statistics highlights that "[r]egular internet use continues to rise, with more than 8 in 10 people going online almost every day in 2016. However, many older people are still to catch up with the digital revolution, with nearly half of single pensioners still having no internet access at all."[3]

Intergenerational projects help develop creative, sustainable opportunities for learning. They can help maintain and refresh the momentum of any digital skills learning group and create opportunities for a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas and experiences. This contributes to learning for older and younger people as well as improving community cohesion by providing opportunities to challenge stereotypes and build relationships. Younger participants report an increased understanding of older people and learning new skills as a result of taking part in an intergenerational project. Outcomes for older participants include feeling safer around younger people, increased respect for younger people and learning new skills.

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[2] http://www.lloydsbank.com/assets/media/pdfs/lloyds-bank-consumer-digital-index-2017.pdf
[3] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetands ocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2016

Intergenerational projects are being carried out across all our jurisdictions, with the following key digital learning aims:

- To improve sustainability by increasing volunteer tutor capacity
- To strengthen the impact of digital learning by linking it to other activities
- To raise the profile of digital learning in the community

Teaching, training, mentoring or coaching digital skills in this way may provide young people or older adults with the experience they need, to help them get into or return to work, build their confidence and develop their careers. In Wales, college students are volunteering to help the local community improve their basic digital literacy skills as part of their Welsh Baccalaureate Community Challenge. Girl guides and police cadets have become 'digital heroes' by supporting people in their local communities to improve their digital skills.

In the UK, the One Digital[4] partnership between Age UK, Ability Net, SCVO, Affinity Sutton, Citizens Online and Digital Unite has successfully helped to improve people's lives. This partnership established a cohort of 1,000 Digital Champions, many of whom reported improved skills and confidence. Of those surveyed, 80% reported increased confidence in their basic digital skills, better understanding of the benefits digital technologies can offer, and increased motivation to use them.

In Northern Ireland, the Digital Age Project[5] supports the use of technology as a tool to link generations whilst promoting digital and social inclusion of older people. The project has established new partnerships between schools and sheltered housing schemes, co-ordinated and delivered IT courses to older people within residential schemes. Through linking the schemes with local schools and youth groups, they delivered intergenerational sessions using ICT as a tool to create links between older and younger people in communities, with the aim of creating better understanding and interaction. The course and supporting toolkits provided innovative approaches

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[4] https://www.digitalchampionsnetwork.com/one-digital-programme
[5] http://linkinggenerationsni.com/our-work/digital-age-project/

and resources to develop participants' digital capabilities in communicating, carrying out online transactions, finding and using online information.

The Council's Digital Inclusion work sector aims to contribute to developing and expanding intergenerational projects in all our jurisdictions, through sharing best practice. The work sector also aims to evaluate these projects and to produce a paper showing these findings, which could bring together guidance and toolkits on creating and delivering new intergenerational partnerships and projects.

Young people and future skills

People are expected to have a certain level of knowledge, both for their future employment and participation as a citizen. The Member Administrations recognise that digital literacy is as important as literacy and numeracy, and is now viewed as a basic skill.

Employer demand for digital skills is growing, with around 72% of employers stating that they would be unwilling to interview candidates without basic IT skills[6]. It is predicted[7] that one million new people will be needed for digital roles in the UK by 2023. By 2020, Europe will have a shortfall of 500,000 IT professionals[8]. Only 54% of people in the UK aged between 16 and 25 rated their confidence as at least seven out of ten that they had the skills needed for a successful career. This echoes concerns by some young people that as more roles become automated, they could be left unemployed[9]. The World Economic Forum[10] reports that 65% of children entering primary school today will be working in roles that do not yet exist. For young people who will work in these new roles, the ability to create – rather than only consume – digital content is vital.

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[6] https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmsctech/270/27004.htm
[7] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/499031/Review_of_Publicly_Funded_Digital_Skills_Qualifications_2016_FINAL.pdf
[8] https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/digital-skills-jobs-coalition
[9] https://www.theguardian.com/technology/datablog/2016/jan/18/young-fear-jobs-automated-10-years-report
[10] https://reports.weforum.org/future-of-jobs-2016/chapter-1-the-future-of-jobs-and-skills/

Increasing numbers of people access online learning for self-development and there are more opportunities for informal learning. However, a skills gap remains and should be recognised, between those who are motivated and supported to make progress, and those who could be left behind through only having a basic level of digital skills.

Across the administrations, governments target their approaches and spending towards digital skills development for young people. Scotland's Digital Xtra Fund, launched in May 2016, works to build stronger links between young people and Scotland's tech industry, promote the range of pathways into the tech sector, and broaden the talent pipeline by targeting underrepresented groups, in particular encouraging more girls to engage in digital and consider STEM subjects. It has distributed £400,000 to 22 projects delivering extracurricular activities, which are expected to reach 15,000 school pupils across every local authority area in Scotland.

Guernsey has developed a new school curriculum which includes Digital Empowerment as one of the three core areas for Education (alongside Communication and Numeracy). Beyond school, the Discover Digital programme supports the development of digital skills, and promotion and growth of the digital sector. The programme showcases digital careers and routes into employment and provides five week summer internships for young people in full-time higher and further education. For those under 16, after school and holiday clubs focus on building skills and interest in digital. In Jersey, the curriculum includes coding lessons in primary schools and compulsory computing for all students up to the age of 16. In the Isle of Man, the computing curriculum has been expanded, and school initiatives such as code clubs and Digital Leaders schemes are popular, with growing demand.

There is an opportunity for the Council to contribute to this development by sharing best practice and educational resources, and by using networks across the administrations to promote and raise awareness of these programmes. A future work sector meeting will focus on this theme. Member Administrations also recognise that

within their own workforce, there is scope for digital skills development and for governments to lead by example; the work sector will continue to develop and share ideas for public sector employees.

Partnerships

Partnership working across all sectors is an essential part of addressing digital inclusion. Local authorities, charities and social enterprises work together to create, fund and deliver schemes that aim to benefit a range of groups. Community organisations can offer in-depth knowledge of, and access to, hard-to-reach communities. Wifi firm Invisinet, which runs informal classes in Bedford, says "We think the key to sustainability and engagement with any community is partnering with local charities, community centres and local organisations."[11]

Large private sector organisations fund initiatives and support their staff to become digital champions, and direct their social responsibility resources towards working with communities. For example, as set out in the UK Digital Strategy, Lloyds Banking Group, Google, Barclays and BT, amongst a number of others, have all pledged support towards digital skills and inclusion. They are training digital champions, helping adults and young people to develop basic and advanced digital skills and supporting deprived communities to get online. The UK Digital Strategy states an intention to set up a Digital Skills Partnership which will bring together businesses, national and local government, charities and all those passionate about this agenda to deliver a more collaborative, coordinated and targeted approach to meeting the digital skills challenge.

Ireland's new Getting Citizens Online Programme is focused on encouraging and empowering citizens to participate fully in a digital economy and society. The Programme includes the 'Digital Skills for Citizens Scheme' which aims to give the one in seven people who have never used the internet the confidence, motivation and skills to take their first steps online. Under the scheme, grant funding of €2.2m has been provided in 2017 to 15 community and voluntary organisations to provide

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[11] https://digitalinclusion.blog.gov.uk/2016/03/22/guest-post-coffee-with-friends-and-an-ipad/

formal classroom training in basic digital skills, free of charge, to some 26,000 citizens. Training is targeted at people over 45, farming communities, small business owners, the unemployed, persons with disabilities and disadvantaged groups. The Programme will also establish a partnership framework, comprising public and private sector stakeholders, to provide digital assistance to support citizens to "do more with digital" in their everyday life.

Continuing to create, develop and maintain effective partnerships is key to maximising benefits, while being aware that there are challenges involved. This means defining common objectives for partnership working and identifying organisations whose goals and targets align with member jurisdictions. There is an opportunity for the Council to work collaboratively to develop relationships with large organisations to represent the collective needs of all our administrations. The Digital Inclusion work sector will consider how Member Administrations can work closely to secure support from non-government organisations to support digital inclusion across these islands.

The work sector will look for opportunities to work together to build relationships with the private and third sector and raise awareness of the Council to these organisations as a channel for future multi-government interaction. This will include inviting organisation representatives to work sector meetings and, where possible, sharing details of collaboration when individual administrations begin new work with the private and/or third sectors.

Next Steps

The Council's approval is sought to continue the Digital Inclusion work sector and to maintain links with the work of the Social Inclusion work sector where appropriate.

The work sector proposes to take forward work in the following areas in the period ahead:
   a. Intergenerational working
   b. Young people and future skills

c. Partnerships

The Digital Inclusion forward work plan is annexed and submitted to Ministers for their views and agreement.

Annex – Digital Inclusion Forward Work Plan

	Deliverables and Milestones	**Lead**	**Start Date**	**End Date**
1	Monitor digital inclusion policy across Member Administrations, specifically: • Identify new legislation or policies; • Collate good practice, details on specific initiatives and contacts; • Share digital research and academic papers	Isle of Man Government	Ongoing	Ongoing
2	Review specific areas of digital inclusion/ skills policy and facilitate evidence exchanges at a series of officials' meetings, including the following topics:			
	Intergenerational working – support the development and expansion of intergenerational projects in BIC jurisdictions, specifically: • Identify and share best practice; • Evaluate projects; • Produce a paper on these findings, bringing together guidance and toolkits on creating and delivering new intergenerational partnerships and projects.	Northern Ireland Executive Welsh Government Irish Government	June 2017	Nov 2019
	Young people and future skills – contribute to the ongoing development of digital literacy, specifically: • Identify and share best practice and educational resources; • Use networks across the administrations to promote and raise awareness of these programmes. • Develop and share ideas for digital skills development among public sector employees.	Government of Guernsey Government of Jersey Isle of Man Government	June 2017	Nov 2019
	Partnerships – work collaboratively to develop relationships with large organisations whose goals and targets align with member jurisdictions to represent the collective needs of all our administrations, specifically:	Scottish Government UK Government	June 2017	Nov 2019

	• Consider how Member Administrations can work closely to secure support from non-government organisations to support digital inclusion across these islands; • Look for opportunities to work together to build relationships with the private and third sector and raise awareness of the Council to these organisations as a channel for future multi-government interaction; • Invite organisation representatives to work sector meetings and, where possible, share details of collaboration when individual administrations begin new work with the private and/or third sectors.			