



COMMUNIQUÉ

2nd Ministerial meeting of the Digital Inclusion work sector

05 March 2021

The British-Irish Council Digital Inclusion work sector held its second Ministerial meeting today via virtual platform, hosted by the Isle of Man Government. Ministers were welcomed by Hon Ray Harmer MHK, Minister for Policy and Reform on behalf of the Isle of Man Government.

The British-Irish Council (BIC), established in 1999, is a forum for its members to discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of its Member Administrations. The BIC Digital Inclusion work sector is led by the Isle of Man Government, and was formed at the twelfth BIC Summit which was held in Cardiff in February 2009. The meeting held today focused on how the eight Member Administrations can continue to work together to address digital inclusion and collaborate on the promotion of online safety, and building digital skills and confidence. Ministers discussed how the Covid-19 pandemic had brought these issues to the fore as administrations responded to the public health challenge.

The meeting was chaired by Hon Ray Harmer MHK, Minister for Policy and Reform in the Isle of Man Government. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Andrea Dudley-Owen, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. The Irish Government was represented by Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for Transport and Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications. The Government of Jersey was represented by Deputy Jeremy Maçon, Minister

for Education. The Northern Ireland Executive was represented by Conor Murphy MLA, Minister of Finance and Diane Dodds MLA, Minister for the Economy. The Scottish Government was represented by Ivan McKee MSP, Minister for Trade, Innovation and Public Finance. The UK Government was represented by Caroline Dinenage MP, Minister of State for Digital and Culture. The Welsh Government was represented by Julie James MS, Minister for Housing and Local Government. A full list of delegation members is attached.

Ministers considered and reflected on two discussion papers prepared by the Digital Inclusion work sector and presented at the meeting. The first, '*Online Safety and Digital Inclusion*' outlined the work under way in the eight Member Administrations in promoting and safeguarding online safety within the context of digital inclusion and digital skills.

The second paper, '*The Evolution of Digital Inclusion*' outlined how the work sector has developed its work to focus on online safety, the digital inclusion issues that arose as a result of the Covid-19 global pandemic, and how these themes will continue to inform the future work of the BIC Digital Inclusion work sector.

Ministers also reviewed three infographics produced by the work sector to collaborate on awareness raising and promotional material, in line with their agreed areas of focus. Each infographic provided four simple tips and advice for members of the public to safely and confidently go online.

- The 'Be Safe' infographic was launched on Safer Internet Day 2020, 09 February 2020, and provides useful tips to staying safe online.
- The 'Be Included' infographic was launched on Safer Internet Day 2021, 09 February 2021, and provides simple tips for getting started in the online world.
- The 'Be Connected' infographic will be launched today, the day of the Ministerial meeting, 05 March 2021, and covers helpful ways to get connected, making the most out of the online world and highlighting the benefits available.

Ministers discussed the benefits and increasing importance of digital participation in everyday life, particularly highlighted by the Covid-19 global health pandemic. Ministers recognised the scale of the challenge posed by the pace of technological change acknowledged the vital role played by Administrations as well as voluntary, community, public sector and private sector organisations in addressing these challenges.

Future Work Programme

Ministers agreed that the Digital Inclusion work sector should continue to collaborate on the themes of promoting online safety and digital skills, and addressing digital inclusion across the Member Administrations, continuing to share best practice in these areas. Ministers also agreed that the work sector should place a particular focus on young people and future skills development, as well as working in partnership with the private and third sectors to promote digital inclusion. Ministers confirmed that the work sector should consider similar promotional and awareness raising initiatives as the infographics in the future.

Ministers agreed that they would next meet to discuss digital inclusion in 2023.

BIC Secretariat
05 March 2021

List of Delegates

<u>Isle of Man Government</u>	
Minister for Policy and Reform	Hon Ray Harmer MHK
<u>Government of Guernsey</u>	
Minister for Education, Sport and Culture	Deputy Andrea Dudley-Owen
<u>Irish Government</u>	
Minister for Transport and Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications	Eamon Ryan TD
<u>Government of Jersey</u>	
Minister for Education	Deputy Jeremy Maçon
<u>Northern Ireland Executive</u>	
Minister of Finance	Conor Murphy MLA
Minister for the Economy	Diane Dodds MLA
<u>Scottish Government</u>	
Minister for Trade, Innovation and Public Finance	Ivan McKee MSP
<u>UK Government</u>	
Minister of State for Digital and Culture	Caroline Dinenage MP
<u>Welsh Government</u>	
Minister for Housing and Local Government	Julie James MS