

Section 5

Equipping Everyone to Benefit from Digital Britain

We will only reap the benefits of becoming a digital nation if we ensure that everyone has access to the right education, skills and digital media literacy programmes to ensure that being digital is within the grasp of everyone.

5.1 Education and Skills

There is virtually no-one, from young children to the very elderly, who does not engage in some way with digital technologies in today's Britain. The average adult spends almost half of his or her waking hours using the products and services of the digital information and communications industries, whether at work, at home or on the move.

There are three broad categories of skills, which of course overlap and share core competencies.

- **Digital Life Skills – needed by all**
- **Digital Work Skills – needed by most**
- **Digital Economy Skills – needed by some**

More than 22 million in the UK use computers for tasks of varying sophistication in our work every day: these people need digital work skills, which will serve them well also in their leisure and home life. More than 2 million people work directly in creating, providing, maintaining and supporting the systems, network, software applications and content on which the rest of us depend: these people need a higher level of skills, which often draw both upon vital creative skills as well as technical digital skills, alongside the basic competencies of digital work skills.

The education and skills needed to support these categories must be both wide for the many who use the digital technologies for leisure and work (ICT also provides a vital enabling infrastructure in which education and learning take place right across



the curriculum); and deep, for the still very large numbers who design and provide for Digital Britain.

Britain is by no means at the back of the pack globally. But neither do we lead. This country has the potential to become a leader. All the evidence is that effective deployment, understanding and use of digital technologies are crucial to every business's competitiveness. For some it is transforming.

For the supply of high-quality professionals for Digital Britain, the challenges are long-standing and deep-seated: our national willingness to engage in education with the 'hard' subjects- mathematics, technology and the physical sciences; our ability to combine, in those who do, creative and cognitive capability and deep technical competence with interpersonal and business skills; and the relevance of courses to business and the understanding of the career opportunities for students of both sexes.

The simple message at the core of this interim report is that we cannot afford to treat education and training for digital technologies as just another 'vertical' subject area. It underpins everything we do in the 21st Century. Successful, emerging economies have already embraced this message. We must do likewise.

Similarly, in education and training for digital life skills, we need a step change in approach, starting with the youngest. The interim report of Sir Jim Rose's independent review of the primary curriculum is one very encouraging sign. He rightly focuses on the need effectively to engage an entire generation growing up with the internet, multi-media formats and broadband. This starts with inspiring and innovative programmes and initiatives to engage a new generation of students and attract them into technology-inspired and creative careers.

The Government's report on the creative industries, Creative Britain proposed pathways through training, apprenticeships and support for business start up in the creative sector. As part of this strategy, the *Find your Talent* initiative offers young people regular involvement with arts and culture in and out of school to develop their own creative skills. Likewise, the Sector Skills Councils, e-skills UK and Skillset, have recognised the urgent need to change attitudes and stimulate demand among young people for technology and creative media-related degrees and careers. For example, the project *Revitalise IT*, led by e-Skills UK, aims to build on its existing employer-supported education programmes including the Information Technology Management for Business (ITMB) degree course, while the new Diplomas in IT and Creative Media for 14-19 year olds, and Skillset's Digital Media Apprenticeship are also noteworthy.

The first step is to understand the importance of ensuring that all children and young people in education have access to the right level of learning and technical resources to enable them to develop the vital first steps of digital life skills and digital work skills without which they will be unable to play a full part in society. To achieve that, we will also need to ensure that our teachers have the skills and support they require to provide the right level of learning.

The Government is also looking at the ways to ensure that the most disadvantaged young people are not left behind because they lack technical facilities in their homes.



One key initiative in this area was recently launched by the Prime Minister, who in the Home Access programme made clear that every child in England should have access to a computer to enable them to fully engage in their education and through this initiative also be equipped for the contemporary knowledge economy.

The Government must not ignore those adults who are disadvantaged because they lack these crucial digital life and work skills: at the life skills level, we can address these issues through Media Literacy with which we deal in the next section.

At the level of digital work skills, we are working to ensure that education and skills provision is reaching those who need it, offering the right level of support to meet the needs and aspirations of both learners and potential employers. The recently announced initiatives to offer training to job seekers also offers important support. It is also encouraging to see some good examples of employers sustaining and even in some instances increasing their commitment to training and skills development for their workforces, recognising the evidence that investment in the workforce is one of the best strategies for economic development. We will be returning to this important subject in our final report.

The digital economy skills build on the basic competencies and introduce and integrate a wide range of creative, technological and business skills. The digital economy relies upon these hybrid professionals who can bridge technology, creativity and business. It needs leaders and managers throughout business understanding and being able to manage the links between business strategy, innovation and creativity, and technological deployment.

The pathways from education to business are complicated. There is more work to be done to strengthen the understanding of the ways for education and business to work together to create the skilled workers and leaders which businesses need. We make the most of partnerships for research and development and innovation. We will be working with the Sector Skills Councils to develop some practical action points for Government, higher education and work sectors for the final report.

The Government has asked Liam Byrne and Alan Millburn to look specifically at the media in their work on New Opportunities. The country cannot afford for this important area to miss out on the talent of people simply because of where they live or because they do not know the right entry points. We need to make sure that we find and develop all talent.

Within the creative industries, there is still a tendency to regard investment in skills and training as the first area to be cut in hard times rather than the first area for investment.

The Sector Skills Councils have done excellent work in bringing together training provision to support the many small and medium-sized businesses working in the creative industries, and to offer personal development provision within and between different areas of these converging sectors. We will also be asking them to come forward with recommendations on further actions for our final report.



Government already has a significant workplan underway to address skills, including the Skillset Media Academy, the Diplomas in IT and Creative Media, the IT Management and Business degree and the National Skills Academy for IT, which is due to open this year. In line with our recent High Level Skills Strategy, we look to employers and the Higher Education Sector to collaborate effectively around meeting demand for higher level skills, ensuring continuing investment in both the existing and future work force.

In addition, the Government has established the Technology Strategy Board (TSB) to promote and support research into, and development and exploitation of, technology and innovation for the benefit of UK business, in order to increase economic growth and improve the quality of life. Digital Creative Industries have been a priority application area for R&D funding. It has *also* invested in Knowledge Transfer Networks (KTNs) which are national networks in specific fields of technology or business application, e.g. Creative Industries & Digital Communications, which bring together people from businesses, universities, further education, research, finance, the public sector and technology organisations to stimulate innovation through knowledge exchange.

The Digital Britain team will continue to work with other government departments, and agencies including DIUS, Becta, HEFCE and DCSF in taking forward our work in this area. This is an area that requires business, education providers and the voluntary sectors to work together and it is an area where we welcome responses to this interim report.

We will return with recommendations across digital life-skills, digital work-skills and digital economy skills, in the final Digital Britain Report.

5.2 Media Literacy

If we are to maximise the digital opportunity, we will need to ensure a population that is confident and empowered to access, use and create digital media.

Aspects of this are being addressed through the cross-government 'Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation'. There is also a wide range of organisations, both private and public, that are doing some excellent work promoting what is currently called media literacy. The child protection aspects of that work have, following the Byron Review, rightly been brigaded within the recently-established UK Council for Child Internet Safety. The Byron model, which stresses the importance of educating families to navigate the internet safely by a combination of information on content and skills, understandably, focuses on the interests of the child. But it is a good model for wider application.



The Byron Review and the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)

Professor Tanya Byron was commissioned to lead a review on the risks to children from exposure to potentially harmful or inappropriate material on the internet and in video games. The review was published on 27 March 2008 and Government accepted all Professor Byron's recommendations.

The review found that:

- Digital technologies offer enormous opportunities for fun, learning and development.
- With these new opportunities come potential risks. Parents' general lack of confidence and awareness about new technology is leaving children vulnerable within their digital worlds. Parents need the right support to overcome this 'digital divide' and engage with their children.
- Decisions about what is harmful and inappropriate for children, as opposed to illegal, are largely subjective: what one family feels is unsuitable for their children may not be considered or experienced in the same way by another.
- Keeping children and young people safe from harm must be the priority and responsibility of us all. While children need to be able to learn, have new experiences and enjoy their childhoods, we need to help families strike the right balance between keeping children safe and allowing them the freedom they need.
- There is no silver bullet solution to making our children safer and we need a shared culture of responsibility with families, industry and government all playing their part to reduce the availability of potentially harmful material, restrict access to it by children and increase children's resilience.

In order to improve children's digital safety, the Review made a number of ground breaking recommendations including

- The creation of a new UK Council for Child Internet Safety, established by and reporting to the Prime Minister, and including representation from across Government, industry, children's charities and other key stakeholders including children, young people and parents.
- Challenging industry to take greater responsibility in supporting families through establishing transparent and independently monitored codes of practice on areas such as user-generated content; improving access to parental control software and safe search features; and better regulation of online advertising.
- Developing a comprehensive public information and awareness campaign on child internet safety across Government and industry, and which includes an authoritative 'one stop shop' on child internet safety.



- Setting in place sustainable education and children’s service initiatives to improve the skills of children and their parents around e-safety. This includes making sure schools and teachers have the necessary support to be e-safe.
- Specific measures to support vulnerable children and young people, such as taking down illegal internet sites that promote harmful behaviour, such as suicide, self-harm and eating disorders, while at the same time providing the right space and support where at risk people can safely talk.

UKCCIS

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) is a central part of the recommendations. It is a forum enabling Government and stakeholders – including industry, law enforcement, and the third sector – to come together and contribute jointly to the development and delivery of the strategy for child internet safety. The Council was officially launched by the Prime Minister on 29 September alongside the formal announcement of the membership of the Executive Board.

The Government will work with partners through UKCCIS to produce a Child Internet Safety Strategy which will be published in spring 2009. The strategy will form part of the Child Internet Safety Summit which will be hosted by the Prime Minister.

The work of UKCCIS will drive the programme for ensuring children, young people and parents have the necessary skills and support to make the most from the internet and video games while minimising the potential risks. It will work with other Government programmes, such as Digital Britain, to ensure a coordinated response across Whitehall to maximising the enormous opportunities and innovation that new technology provides.

Beyond these measures to address child safety and education issues, ensuring a smart, confident and empowered population in a Digital Britain is likely to require a step change in our current approach with such a central focus and clear agenda for delivery.



ACTION 22

The current statutory and specific remit on media literacy is contained within s.11 of the Communications Act 2003. As this report makes clear, since 2003 there have been significant market changes in the availability of digital technologies and how they are used. We will ask Ofcom to make an assessment of its current responsibilities in relation to media literacy and, working with the BBC and others, to recommend a new definition and ambition for a National Media Literacy Plan.

5.3 Online Safeguards

There are many reasons why people choose not to engage with digital technology, but lack of confidence is often a significant factor. As in the case of crime off-line, perceptions and fear of the prevalence of fraud, identity theft and other online crime often run ahead of their actual incidence. Many people lack the knowledge to be sure what to do when something unexpected happens to them online. We need to ensure that UK internet users can operate with security and confidence. The route to achieving this will be through ensuring a partnership approach to strengthening security against online crime and building user confidence. This is important to online business as well – we want to make the UK the safest place to do business online.

A globally connected universal broadband world will bring into sharper focus the balance to be struck between freedom of expression and protection against harmful, offensive and illegal content and information.

We see four tiers of content and information around which policy analysis can be developed:

- material which is acceptable and enjoyed by everybody;
- material that may be offensive to some people or groups.;
- material potentially harmful to vulnerable groups; especially children; and
- material breaching the law.

The internet is by nature global and content originates from millions of different people and organisations. This content is not capable of being successfully regulated in the same way as traditional, national broadcasting. A world of universal broadband will require a new approach to online safeguards.

Such an approach should combine effective enforcement of the law of the land (e.g. as with the Internet Watch Foundation and the work of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre in eradicating the sexual abuse of children), constructive use of technology (e.g. blocking or filtering by software on the user's PC) and self-regulation (e.g. where content aggregators label content in accordance with industry codes of practice). There should be a clearer role for trusted brands that provide a guarantee of the nature of the content that may be accessed through their product (e.g. the approach Apple has taken to making available applications that run on iPhone). This framework, combined with media literacy initiatives, will support the



greater parental and personal responsibility essential to realise safely and effectively the full potential of the online world.

We need a clear set of public policy principles supported by a set of supporting guidelines. The public need to know what they can reasonably expect and have confidence that it will be delivered. Our draft core principles and supporting guidelines are:

PRINCIPLES

- protection for children;
- empowerment for parents; and
- informed consent for adults.

SUPPORTING GUIDELINES

- a safer online experience for children and families on which the UK Council on Child Internet Safety is leading;
- effective removal of illegal content;
- clear information on how personal data is collected, how it is used and where it is shared;
- clear and effective labelling to help people avoid material likely to be harmful or offensive; and
- effective and readily available filters and other software that consumers can use easily to protect themselves and their families.

We will do further work, in conjunction with industry and others, to develop these principles and guidelines in ways proportionate to the challenge, and we will set out the conclusions of this work in the final Digital Britain Report later this year.

