Chapter 2

Being Digital

"The number one benefit of information technology is that it empowers people to do what they want to do. It lets people be creative. It lets people be productive. It lets people learn things they didn't think they could learn before, and so in a sense it is all about potential."
Steve Ballmer, Chief Executive, Microsoft

AMBITION: TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE CAN SHARE IN THE BENEFITS OF A DIGITAL BRITAIN

Living and working in Digital Britain

1. Building a Digital Knowledge Economy in the 21st Century will be fundamental to the UK's future prosperity. For the country to reap the maximum benefits, we need to put people at the centre of all our digital thinking. The changes we propose in this Report are intended to improve social mobility, promote UK business competitiveness and to improve our everyday lives from our education system to the businesses we run, from careers to how we participate in a modern democratic society.

2. The Government made clear in this year's budget its commitment to a modern knowledge-based economy underpinned by a strong communications infrastructure. It announced that the Government would pursue a Universal Broadband Service, at a speed of 2 Megabits per second, by no later than 2012. Achieving that goal will allow virtually everyone to experience the benefits of broadband, including the increasing delivery of public services online. It made clear that Universal Service will be complemented with further support to improve basic digital skills and promote broadband take-up, ensuring that adoption of broadband continues to grow in line with the expanding opportunities available.

3. Digital technology – and particularly the Internet – is the common backbone for numerous services and devices that most people now take for granted, including MP3 players, web-enabled mobile phones, online gaming, social networking, multi-channel television, digital radio and podcasts. But it is much more than that. Digital technology is no longer simply desirable. It is rapidly becoming an essential facility for citizens and consumers in a modern society.

4. The changes that digital technologies bring require us to develop **a new level of participation** for a competitive digital knowledge economy and a modern democratic and fair 21st Century society. A Digital "Big Bang" will transform how we participate in a modern democracy, how we learn, how businesses operate, how we find jobs and how we do them, how we access our public services and how we develop our creativity, make the most of our free time and network with friends.

Case Studies

Throughout this report, we have included case studies of how Digital Britain benefits different sections across society. They show how:

Young people and families are increasingly viewing digital technologies as the norm, including for music listening, multi-channel television, e-commerce and shopping, research and school work and staying in contact through email and mobile phones.

Education is being transformed in schools and universities through the use of online whiteboards, animation technology in lessons, remote and virtual learning and new IT suites where children are taught to safely navigate the web, store and protect their own content and practise web design.

Health care delivery is changing with the use of digital data to enhance record keeping, access test results, update the latest research, make prescriptions and improve appointment schedules.

Small businesses are using digital technology to revolutionise how they operate through online marketing and sales, improving accounting and internal procedures, online tax returns and record keeping and payments. The Internet enables such small businesses to reach a global audience for their products.

Bigger businesses are transforming their working practices through the use of broadband communications, intranets, webcasts, online advertising and dealer and customer relationships. Digital technology is transforming everything from product design to purchasing portals and customer communications.

Families and older people are using digital technology to communicate through email, engaging with their local communities, communicating with relatives across the globe on webcams and for information and advice, care and support.

5. People will rely on technology tools for most important areas of their life. The advantages of being part of the digital revolution will be vital for work, as well as central to playing a full part in the community and with family and friends. We foresee benefits of Internet use in a number of areas, including:

   1) **Social Mobility:** through providing additional educational and vocational opportunities.

   2) **Financial Savings:** through competitive pricing, lower utility bills, price comparison websites and many other ways.

   3) **Educational Attainment:** through online learning, information provision and research and remote and virtual learning.

   4) **Improved Salary Prospects:** because already computer skills carry a wage premium.

   5) **Democratic Engagement:** through increased opportunities to participate in and discuss the democratic process.

   6) **Increased Satisfaction with Public Services:** because online delivery of public services brings greater choice, flexibility and personalisation of service delivery.

Some of the Benefits of Being Online

Health Services – Because Internet based health services can offer greater detail and information about healthy eating, dieting, exercise, diagnosis, treatment and recovery.

Online Shopping – There are significant benefits, both financial and social, that come from being able to shop online, getting the cheapest deal and saving time especially when using price comparison websites. Further important benefits are emerging for people with disabilities or those unable to venture out allowing them greater independence in their daily life.

Online Banking – Including paying bills, allowing quick and easy payment methods, greater control over finances, a wider choice of savings products and access to international markets and share trading.

Job Applications – Using the Internet allows job seekers to search effectively for employment, some of which is advertised only online. Web-based application systems have become much more simple and easy to use.

Self Publishing – New content creation systems have enabled millions of people to distribute their work – the written word, audio, photo sharing and video material – to a global online audience.

Communication – The Internet offers access to a huge range of communication devices to us. These range from the very simple applications such as email in which we can communicate with people anywhere to instant messaging and VOIP which allow us to communicate with people around the world instantly and for free. All these systems have been augmented by social networking sites that allow us to keep in contact with old friends and new.

6. **In the lead up to this Report, the Communications Consumer Panel conducted some research into the importance of the Internet in modern society. It found that:**

- Most people with broadband at home already feel they could not be without it. More than 70% of such people described it as essential or important. People with broadband at home value it more highly than their mobile phone, land line or digital TV.
- Most people (regardless of whether they have broadband or not) consider it essential for some groups of people to have broadband at home, notably those with school-age children and people who are physically isolated.
- Most people consider that in the near future it will be essential for everyone to have broadband at home. More than 80% agreed (46% strongly) that it should be possible to have broadband at home, regardless of where people live. Among respondents, 81% agreed (42% strongly) that it is everyone's right to be able to have broadband at home.
- People who do not have it are expected to be at a significant disadvantage. This is because people expect that more vital services will be delivered solely online in the future, or be provided offline in a way that penalises people who access them in this way, perhaps at a higher cost or lower quality. It is expected that people could lose access to a wide range of services and activities: shopping, banking, school work, public services, and downloading TV content.

7. Today, nearly a fifth of web users use the Internet as their first port of call when investigating a health concern.[3] Twenty hours of content is uploaded to YouTube every minute. Already, being a computer user commands a wage premium of between 3 and 10%, when individual, occupation and industry effects are taken into account. The financial savings flowing from an ability to use comparison websites and online-only deals are worth an average of around £23 per month, per individual. Online retail creates opportunities for both sellers and consumers. While consumers benefit from savings online they also spend on average 20% more online that they do offline.[4]

8. And whilst some of the popular activities on the Internet today, such as accessing information, communicating and carrying out transactions can be done on a relatively slow Internet connection, already a considerable proportion of online activity, such as downloading and streaming TV content (e.g. the BBC's iPlayer), require faster broadband connections of at least around 2Mbps. This trend will continue and grow.

9. This technology is particularly critical for certain sections of society. For example, for families with school age children where the Internet is essential for educational purposes, for the unemployed as more job search is conducted

3 Does the Internet improve lives? – FreshMinds/UK online centres, April 2009
4 Economic benefits of digital inclusion – building the evidence, published in April 2008 by UK online centres

online and for the physically and socially isolated, such as the elderly, people with disabilities and those living in rural and remote areas, for whom the Internet can bring huge new opportunities for engagement and participation.

10. Participation in social networking opportunities is redefining how children communicate with each other. Arguably, a more important development is that pupils who use the Internet for educational purposes are more likely to out-perform those without web access – by around ¼ of a GCSE grade in each subject. This in turn increases the UK's competitiveness by creating a more highly skilled workforce.[5] In the workplace, 90% of new jobs now require digital skills.[6]

Children and Young People in Digital Britain

As part of the Digital Britain process twelve young people, between the ages of 11 and 16, from the Young NCB (National Children Bureau) and Life Routes projects were invited by the Digital Britain team to participate in the Digital Britain Summit held on 17th April 2009. Their remit was to discuss and give their viewpoint on where they see Digital Britain in 20 years time. We are publishing their Report alongside this document today.

Giving children and young people the skills and tools that they need to participate in Digital Britain is of critical importance from both a social and economic perspective. If we are to truly maximise the potential of these digital economy and the benefits it can bring to all sections of society, we must ensure that children and young people are confident and empowered to access, use and create digital media.

Professor Tanya Byron's Review in relation to Child Safety on the Internet last year addressed the critical need for a sustained information and education strategy targeted at children. The Byron Review highlighted the important role of schools and other services for children and families in equipping children and families with digital skills.

This Report endorses the recommendations made in the Byron Review. The importance of ICT skills will continue to grow and the Government must ensure that all our children and young people are equipped to prosper in Digital Britain.

Current Participation in Digital Britain

11. Today's products and services are making it easier to enjoy the benefits of new technologies and digital services. More than 1 billion applications have been downloaded on the iPhone worldwide. A quarter of us have watched TV on the

5 Economic benefits of digital inclusion – building the evidence, published in April 2008 by UK online centres

6 Delivering Digital Inclusion – An Action Plan for Consultation (2008) http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/communities/deliveringdigitalinclusion

Internet. Almost half of the UK population has used the Internet in the last year to access information about Government or local council services. In UK households, 90% of us have digital television and over a quarter of us have a digital radio. The number of mobile minutes we spend calling has risen by 90% in the last five years.

12. For most people, the technology revolution we have seen in the last 10 years has brought enormous benefits. Yet, today, over 15 million adults in the UK still do not use the Internet. If we are going to maximise the benefits across society, we must also ensure that we address the needs of those 15 million.

13. Those not using the Internet also risk missing out on the full benefits of digitally delivered public services, which can provide greater flexibility and personalisation for the user. We explore the digital delivery of public services in more detail in Chapter 8.

14. It is already increasingly the case that those without access to the Internet suffer economic disadvantage. Their opportunities and livelihoods can be compromised by exclusion from the digital world.

15. More fundamentally, they miss out on areas of learning for themselves and their families and increasingly, they may begin to miss out accessing the full benefits of online public services from health to financial services and employment advice. They miss out on the easy access to relevant information, from the daily updates on weather or transport, to important breaking news at local, regional, national or international levels. Access to news is part of daily life as well as an essential ingredient for democracy.

16. Finally, people miss out on leisure activities and creative development which is increasingly part of the "social glue" for friends, families, communities of interest and society as a whole.

17. The concern of isolation and loneliness, of being the person in a social group who gets left behind, who fails to understand or follow cultural references, are as powerful as motivators for some sectors of society to acquire and improve their digital skills, as the more obvious economic, educational and democratic benefits.

Ofcom Research: Accessing the Internet at Home

Ofcom's recent research project, *Accessing the Internet at Home – A Quantitative and Qualitative Study Among People without the Internet at Home* (by Ipsos Mori) looks at why these people do not have Internet services, and at what price, if any, would they be willing to pay for it and what can be done to encourage take-up.

The key findings were:

- When asked what the main reason for not having the Internet was, self exclusion ('there's no need' or 'I'm not bothered') accounted for 42% of those without Internet access at home.

- Financial/resource exclusion ('can't afford it' or 'no computer') accounted for 30% and the remaining 18% intended to get Internet access at home in the next 6 months. The evidence suggested a strong correlation between experience of the Internet and the intention to get it at home – 72% of this group were Internet users outside the home.[7]
- 42% of people interviewed were willing to pay something for an Internet connection, 13% would get it if they could get free Internet connection and computer but 43% would not get it even if both were free and said that it was irrelevant to their lives.
- Within the 30% of those in the financial/resource exclusion group, two subgroups were identified – 26% were those whose main reason related to costs or equipment and 4% were those who said they did not have the knowledge or skills. 55% of those who cite cost live in social category DE homes.
- Awareness of the Internet was widespread with only 3% of respondents saying they had never heard it. Use outside the home also varied widely: 32% of respondents used the Internet outside of the home; 24% were non-users with indirect access via family or friends carrying out tasks on the Internet on their behalf; and 43% were non-users without access either directly or indirectly.
- Within the self-exclusion group, two subgroups were identified: 37% for whom the Internet was not of interest and 5% who said they did not need it at home because they were happy with the access they had. Respondents who said they were indifferent tended to be older and did not use the Internet.
- The study overall found that a genuine interest in the Internet is a prerequisite to take-up. It's also important to bear in mind that even if a spark of interest is generated, there may be other barriers to take up including skills, resources and affordability.

18. Among non Internet using groups a common response to "digital self-exclusion" is that they say they are living contentedly offline and see no real need or benefit to going online. Despite the advantages of digital participation, as outlined in this document, 43% of those asked in a recent Ofcom study said that even if offered a 'free computer and broadband subscription', they still would not choose to be online. [8]

19. In other cases, however, the problem is involuntary exclusion. People may understand that there are clear benefits to them in terms of employability, access to cheap online shopping, social networking, healthcare and advice, and so on – but lack either the money to buy kit and subscribe to a broadband service, or the skills to engage. In some cases they may have a disability that

7 Internet users defined in this report as those who use the Internet at least once a year and regular users are those who use the Internet at least once a week.

8 Accessing the Internet at home – A quantitative and qualitative study among people without the Internet at home by Ipsos Mori

prevents them from being online. In these cases there is a compelling case to improve the support and availability given to these groups and communities in order to benefit from the digital opportunities.

20. The Government has been alert to the potential dangers for those who are digitally disconnected and to the dangers of the increasing digital divide. To that end it has put in place a series of important initiatives designed to offer practical and easy to reach help for those not online. There has been an unprecedented investment in training and access and encouragement to get people online at local community level. This investment has delivered the People's Network Programme to ensure that Public Libraries and other local community facilities had free opportunities to learn how to enjoy digital technology, as well as initiatives to put ICT equipment and learning at the heart of schools, to the wide range of local government, higher and further education, cultural and leisure centres which all offer access, training, and openings to learn and use digital technology.

21. This Report allows the Government to assess the excellent work already achieved, and to suggest a step change in the ways to help the digitally disconnected, building on the best practice to date, and on the knowledge and understanding we now have about the barriers and the ways to overcome them.

22. It recognises that the market and innovation offer some important breakthroughs, as well as public service and voluntary sector partnerships.

23. The Government wants to take further action in three areas to drive Digital Participation:

    1) **Affordability:** both in relation to equipment and ongoing costs;

    2) **Capability and Relevance:** ensuring that all citizens have the skills, motivation and confidence they need.

    3) **Availability:** by making sure that wide availability of key services, in particular through the Universal Service Commitment for Broadband which we address in Chapter 3.

Affordability

24. UK consumers today enjoy some of the lowest communications bills of any in the European Market. Companies such as BSkyB, Carphone Warehouse, Virgin Media, BT and many others offer a huge range of individual products and bundled packages at very competitive prices. The intensively competitive nature of the UK Communications Market means that UK consumers will continue to be well served in terms of the prices they pay for communications products.

25. Real monthly household spend in communications services fell for the third year in 2008 and prices have fallen by almost 5% since 2004. It is possible today to buy a new laptop computer on the high street for around £250. In the early days of the digital television switchover programme, a set-top box cost up to £300 whereas today it can now be bought from around £25.

26. However, for some the question of affordability is still critical. Whilst there are significant disadvantages faced by households who do not have Internet access in their own homes, the Government and public sector partners have equipped many community centres with computers and offer safe ways for citizens to learn to use and enjoy the Internet and develop their ICT and creative skills.

27. The Government started to tackle this issue through the Home Access Programme, which addresses the needs of those children in state maintained education without online access at home. On 2 February 2009 the Government began a pilot across Oldham and Suffolk local authorities targeting families with children who can't afford home access that benefits both children and their families in getting online.

28. The pilot for the Home Access Programme has been a success in terms of generating and satisfying demand and is well ahead of target. In March, the Minister agreed that funding for the pilot should not be capped at 7,500 grants but should be extended until all the eligible pool has been served. The extension of the grants shows the great demand there is for access in the home. Any families who are eligible and who have not applied under the pilot scheme will be able to apply under the national rollout from December.

UK Online Centres

UK online centres run a network of around 6,000 centres across England, providing people with help and support to access and use computers and the Internet. They were set up in 2000 with funding from the Department for Education and Skills and there are now UK online centres in 82% of areas of high deprivation. Through UK online centres, people can work through the 'myguide' resource, a free open use tool, funded by the DCSF as a cross-sector resource and developed by the central UK online centres team, which can also be used independently or with support from family and friends. It helps the user plot their own journey through email, web searches, and short courses in anything from using a keyboard and mouse to online safety, shopping, banking and more. People can also become involved in other classes offered by the centres, which are sometimes run in outreach venues to engage those who would not necessarily walk through their doors. UK online centres also run the annual Get Online Day – to help raise awareness about the benefits of technology, and to encourage people to visit their nearest centre.

Of the two million annual users of UK online centres, three-quarters are counted as being socially excluded, and around half have no formal qualifications when they start using a centre. UK online centres often awaken users' appetite for learning, and 64% of visitors progress to take up information, advice and guidance, further education or employment. More than 90% of visitors also access online Government services in a UK online centre.

29. In addition, there are a number of other initiatives already in place in the UK which aim to provide affordable technology such as personal computers for digitally excluded citizens. But demand currently far outstrips the supply of suitable equipment. At the same time many organisations and individuals are disposing of large quantities of older but fully-functional personal computers which often end up in landfill sites, simply because they are unsure of how to recycle these PCs or are worried that unless they destroy the hard drive of the computer that sensitive data may remain and could be accessed by a future user of the PC.

30. Many of these personal computers could be put to secondary use. They could provide affordable access for excluded citizens and have a positive impact on the environment. That requires clearer ways for individuals and companies to understand how to dispose of their old PCs through accredited programmes that ensure correct data cleansing and licensing of the computers. In turn, these schemes must be linked into programmes to provide computers to digitally excluded citizens. More needs to be done to support these initiatives.

Microsoft: Affordable Computers in Milton Keynes

Milton Keynes has more than 10,000 disadvantaged citizens within its population of approximately 250,000 people. Milton Keynes Council wanted to provide these citizens with the opportunity to acquire affordable access to technology and help them develop computer skills whilst enhancing their employment prospects and to take advantage of the economic benefits of being online, including engaging electronically with the Council.

The Council worked with Microsoft to develop the Microsoft Digital Skills for Citizens Programme which enables them to refurbish old council computers, install the latest software, online services and training materials and then loan these computers out to disadvantaged citizens for just £1.50 per week. The scheme has been a great success with more than 1,000 PCs already on loan and now has a waiting list of citizens who would like to join the scheme, limited only by the number of computers available from the council. The scheme recently won a European e-Inclusion Award and constantly receives positive feedback from users.

"It has enabled me to go to college, email friends and make new friends. It is helping me with my education." Citizen of Milton Keynes.
http://www.connectmk.com

31. Finally, the exponential growth in mobile broadband services in the UK in the last 12-18 months has led to the possibility of Internet connection over relatively inexpensive devices such as pre-pay mobile. The Government's commitment to the earliest release of radio spectrum to support next generation wireless technology will further build the capability of this option for many people. We address this in the next chapter.

32. **We invite the newly appointed Champion for Digital Inclusion and Expert Task Force (see below) to evaluate the work already underway, and if necessary, assess priorities for future work by industry, the public sector and other stakeholders.**

CAPABILITY AND RELEVANCE

33. Capability is about ensuring that all citizens have the opportunity to enjoy the direct benefits of digital technology by equipping people with the skills, motivation and confidence to enhance the quality of their lives.

34. The route to engaging people with the new technologies – and empowering them with the skills, knowledge and confidence they need – starts at school. The Government has accepted the findings of Sir Jim Rose's review of the primary curriculum (April 2009) in which he recommended that ICT join English and Maths as the centre piece of the new primary curriculum. Sir Jim made clear that understanding English, communication and languages underpin success across the curriculum and embrace key skills including viewing, broadcasting, and evaluating. The secondary curriculum also embraces functional skills of English, mathematics and ICT, built comprehensively into the curriculum. The importance of the skills for staying safe, highlighted by Tanya Byron in her review 'Safer Children in a Digital World' have also been included in the personal development strand of the curriculum. Engaging parents is another aspect of the modernised curriculum. It is essential to support child safety policies, but also provides an opportunity to engage parents with the online world.

35. As this Report looks at further in Chapter 6, we believe digital life skills are essential for all citizens. Government therefore welcomes the recommendations of the independent review of ICT user skills for adults conducted by Estelle Morris, including the proposals in relation to:

- Working towards a basic digital life skills entitlement for all adults;
- Clearer progression routes to IT user qualifications;
- Encouraging more provision of training for IT user qualifications; and
- Ensuring skills provision underpins the strategy for digital media literacy.

36. In 2008 the Prime Minister appointed the first Minister for Digital Inclusion. His task was to co-ordinate action across Government in delivering the benefits of digital technology to address the needs of those who are not currently benefiting. The issues being tackled include broadband access, focusing particularly on the more disadvantaged groups and communities.

37. A Digital Inclusion Strategy was published in October which set out some of the key priorities to bring these social and economic advantages, including:

- Increasing employability;
- Building skills and capacities;

- Better public services;
- Empowerment of disadvantaged communities;
- Access to advice and information; and
- Promoting independent living and tackling social isolation.

38. The draft strategy was consulted upon and there was support for the general principle, but also a feeling that the economic case for digital engagement was even stronger than set out. One key proposal that is being taken forward is the appointment of a Champion for Digital Inclusion and Expert Task Force. Their task is:

    Citizen and community empowerment: Making everyone vividly aware of the importance of this agenda and its direct relevance to improving the quality of lives and life chances for all citizens.

    Effective services: Promoting across all sectors the more efficient and effective use of digital technology to support the design, delivery and personalisation of services appropriate to the needs of the most disadvantaged groups and communities.

    Intelligence and Focus: To monitor and evidence the risks and opportunities of emerging digital technology for excluded groups and communities and minimise the environmental impact from these technologies.

39. **We are pleased to announce the appointment of Martha Lane Fox as Champion for Digital Inclusion.** Together with her supporting Task Force, her particular focus is to represent the estimated six million adults who are both socially and digitally excluded.

Users with Disabilities and Digital Britain

Responses to our interim Digital Britain report highlighted the needs of people with disabilities, including people with sight, hearing or dexterity disabilities, learning disabilities and dyslexia, and the potential benefits of new digital technologies to these groups. The key problems identified in the responses were low take-up and lack of accessibility.

Ofcom's annual consumer experience reports found that in 2008 only 42%, 32% and 36% respectively of people with visual, hearing and mobility disabilities had broadband access at home, as opposed to around 60% of the general population.

We recognise the need to take these concerns into account as our action plans are implemented, in particular through the Digital Inclusion Action Plan.

In the proposed new European framework for communications, provisions on access to electronic communications services for Europeans with disabilities have been strengthened to ensure they can benefit from the same usability of services as other citizens, but by different means. For the first time, the EU telecoms rules will include a provision on the availability of terminal equipment offering the requisite services and functions for users with disabilities.

At UK national level there is ongoing work across Government on e-inclusion which supports our work towards the European Union's 'Riga Declaration' (June 2006). In particular there is a priority objective to 'ensure accessibility, affordability and equal participation for disabled users in the digital economy'. For example, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills will lead a group that draws together Government, industry and third sector to explore and understand issues of e-accessibility and develop and share best practice across all sectors.

Government has also helped develop the use of technology to support those living with disabilities through individual funding commitments and pilot projects. These include the work with 'Significan't' to develop 'sign video'. Significan't is a Government funded deaf and sign language led social enterprise providing 'SignVideo', offering instant and high quality sign language interpreting via the videophone.

We recognise that this key area needs further consultation to agree an Implementation Plan with agreed milestones in the overall implementation of Digital Britain.

40. **We will ask the Consumer Expert Group to report on the specific issues confronting people with disabilities' use of the Internet in Digital Britain as they have already done in relation to digital television.**

A NATIONAL PLAN FOR DIGITAL PARTICIPATION

41. Alongside the Digital Inclusion work, many Government departments, organisations and other bodies today are involved in a number of initiatives aimed at promoting media literacy.

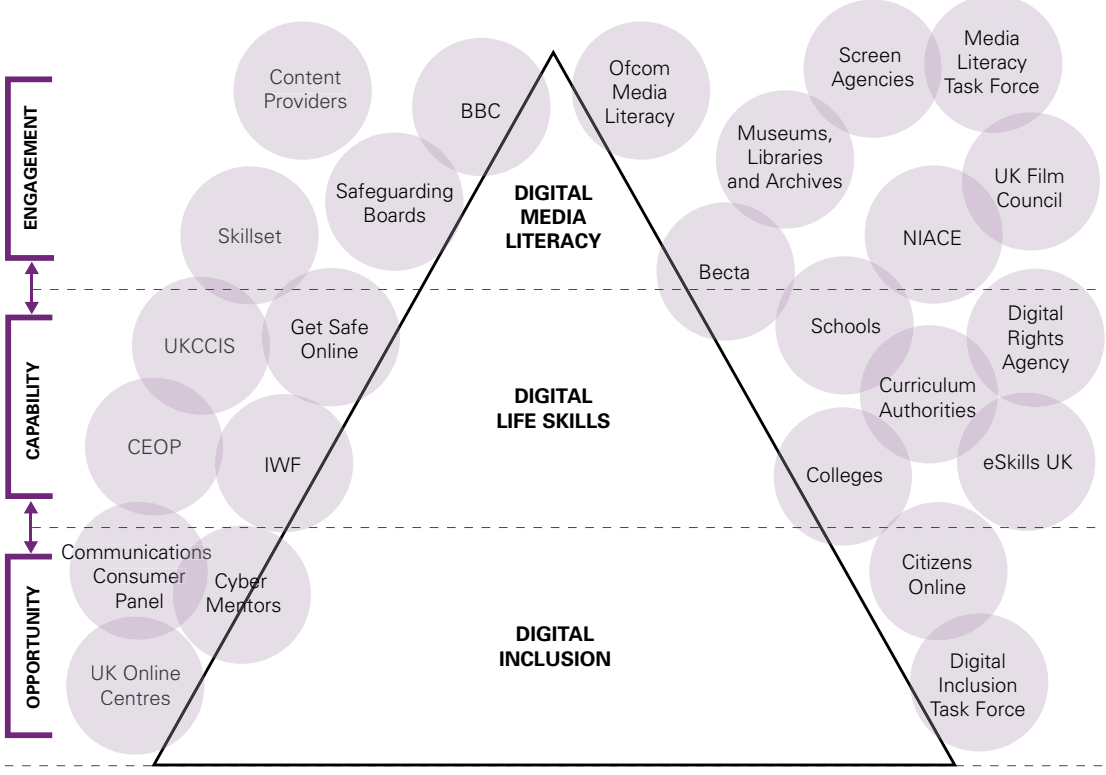
42. On 16 April, The Media Literacy Working Group, chaired by Stewart Purvis of Ofcom, published its report in response to Action 22 of our Interim Report. Action 22 asked Ofcom, in the light of significant market changes in the availability of digital technologies and how they are used, to make an assessment of its current media literacy responsibilities and recommend a new definition and ambition for a National Media Literacy Plan.

43. The Media Literacy Working Group brought together all the relevant Government departments and devolved Nations, BBC, industry, education and Third Sector to develop a central focus, a clear agenda and a fresh and radical new approach, driving Digital Participation in the UK. At the heart of the

Group's recommendations was a fresh new approach to coordinating the number of activities already taking place in this area.

44. It became clear through that process that there were a number of organisations and initiatives aiming to address media literacy. But the approach being adopted was very fragmented, with a large amount of resource being dedicated to this work. They lacked a higher strategic vision or indeed the appropriate aligning of the initiatives to ensure that they were being efficiently delivered and that they were complementing each other. Figure 1 below shows just some of the initiatives currently underway.

Figure 1: The Current Fragmented Approach to Media Literacy



Some of the stakeholders working to address issues related to digital incluson, digital life skills and digital media literacy.

45. Through the process, it also became clear there were numerous working definitions of media literacy but no consistent one. The term "media literacy" was a technocratic and specialist term understood by policy makers but not really part of everyday language.

46. It is important that Government provides clear strategic leadership and vision. To do so, we believe it is now vital to move away from media literacy as a discrete subject and term and to move towards a **National Plan for Digital Participation**.

47. We believe that Digital Participation can be defined as:

"Increasing the reach, breadth and depth of digital technology use across all sections of society, to maximise digital participation and the economic and social benefits it can bring."

GETTING BRITAIN ONLINE

48. As part of driving Digital Participation we must ensure that the offer presented is as compelling as possible and that people are aware of the benefits provided by being online. It is clear that the current offer is not sufficiently exciting to motivate some people to get online. If we are to encourage wider participation, there must be effective promotion of the services and channels that attract people. That will require provision of appropriate support including outreach, skills training, and demonstration of how people can get the most out of the digital revolution, delivered through tailored, local, community-based programmes building on existing networks.

49. Government can play an important part in creating a compelling online offer through the delivery of public services online. Today, websites such as NHS Choices, DVLA, Directgov and many others are successfully serving the general public online. To maximise the opportunity afforded by broadband ubiquity, Government will need to become genuinely "of the web", not just "on the web". We consider this further in Chapter 8.

50. The analogy of digital switchover in television is a useful one. Digital UK has brought together broadcasters, platform operators, retailers, equipment manufacturers, Government departments, infrastructure operators, the third sector and others to create a coherently designed and delivered communications campaign to promote the benefits of digital television and what steps viewers need to take to enjoy those benefits.

Digital UK – Leading the UK's Television Switchover

Digital UK, the not-for-profit company responsible for leading the UK's switchover from analogue to digital TV, has been responsible for promoting the benefits of and educating and assisting the public in relation to television switchover across the UK.

The start of the switchover programme has been a success, with successful switchovers already completed in the Copeland area of Cumbria, the Scottish Borders and part of the West Country.

Digital UK has been the critical delivery agency for switchover, undertaking many activities including the following:

- Providing a central focus and coordinating function for the many parties that have an interest in the switchover process;
- Working with commercial and third sector providers to create a compelling offer that has driven take-up levels well in advance of the moment of compulsion;
- Developing a simple and clear communications strategy that consumers can understand around a complex and major technological change; and
- Providing active support to the most vulnerable in the lead up to at the time of switchover, in particular by working with the third sector.

51. It is an ambitious and important goal to create a similarly compelling offer for being online. To be achieved, it will require coordination and a clear and co-ordinated series of messages about the benefits.

52. **We support the Working Group's proposals for the formation of a Consortium of Stakeholders, led by Ofcom, to drive Digital Participation. Funding will be made available of up to £12m over three years from the Universal Service provision announced in Budget 2009. It will support a new programme managed by members of the Consortium, with a review taking place 12 months after the start of the Programme to audit the effectiveness of this approach.**

53. We support this proposal because it has two powerful but simple ideas. Firstly, achieving a digitally engaged population requires action to motivate those not yet engaged. And secondly, this will best be achieved through a systematic, sustained and co-ordinated approach to increasing Digital Participation.

54. The Government believes that a Programme will need to have three distinct aspects, the first two driven by the Consortium and the third critical leg by Government:

    1) **A Communications Campaign:** with a co-ordinated mix of marketing techniques that leverages the assets of the consortium members including their brands, literature, audiovisual materials and advertising inventories.

    2) **Targeted Outreach:** to engage those who need more support. This direct outreach work could follow the switchover timetable and harness the interest raised in digital technologies by the digital switchover process.

    3) **Digital Switchover of Public Services:** bringing the benefits of online delivery of Government services to users. We consider this further in Chapter 8.

55. We urge the Consortium and Digital UK to work together closely, identifying and leveraging any potential synergies that can be appropriately exploited. These could include the network of volunteers currently helping Digital UK with outreach work for vulnerable and isolated adults not eligible for the Digital Switchover Help Scheme.

56. In addition, we believe the Consortium of Stakeholders should consider how to utilise existing networks of volunteers and resources effectively, including those who support UK Online, Digital Unite, Citizens Online, local authorities and applications such as MyGuide.

57. We believe the Digital Champion and Expert Task Force should liaise closely with the Consortium to develop best practise for the Programme.

58. In addition, we believe that Ofcom and the Consortium should consider how best to continue to work with the devolved Nations on these issues, in particular by capturing the best practice from across the UK and building on it, working with both relevant central Government departments and the devolved institutions who have worked so well with the Consortium so far.

Activity in the Nations

A selection of some of the work currently being done in the nations in media literacy includes:

Wales: 'The Learning Country: Vision in Action' (2008) describes how the Welsh Assembly Government is developing an ICT strategy for schools to harness the potential of ICT in transforming teaching and learning. References to ICT are included in guidance documents to support the 'Framework for Children's Learning for 3-7 year olds in Wales' at primary level and at secondary level, there is a close fit between the learning outcomes within Ofcom's specification of media literacy and the statutory curriculum for schools under English and Welsh orders, the PSE framework and the ICT curriculum.

Scotland: The Scottish Government published a paper on literacy across the curriculum which talks about 'writing using a range of media' and of taking advantage of the opportunities offered by technologies. The LTS provides a range of resources relevant to media literacy promotion in schools.

Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland's Programme for Government sets out strategic priorities for Northern Ireland in 2008-11 in which technology will play a key role in providing a highly skilled and flexible workforce. In 2005, a new A/AS Level in Moving Image Arts was introduced and from September 2009 it will also be taught as a GCSE.

59. **Finally, we will evaluate the work of the Consortium after 12 months using the following metrics:**

1) **Reach:** access; number of households online, and numbers using the Internet outside the home;

2) **Breadth of engagement:** modes of usage and consumption (communication, retail, content consumed, public services used);

3) **Depth of engagement:** user contributions, comments, joining networks, user generated content, self publishing, content creation, photos uploaded and shared, etc; and

4) **Social and economic impact:** particularly the impact on economic recovery and benefits for disadvantaged groups and communities.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE CONSORTIUM

60. Following Ofcom's work, a number of organisations have agreed in principle to join the Consortium. They include the BBC, ITV, Channel 4, BSkyB, Broadband Stakeholders Group, the Mobile Broadband Group, UK online centres, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education and a number of social and media portals including AOL, Bebo, MySpace Google and Yahoo!. In addition, several museums including Tate and the British Library have also expressed an interest in joining the Consortium.

61. This is an excellent start, but as the work of the Consortium develops, it is likely that the Consortium membership will need to adapt and potentially expand. There are a number of organisations that can help to deliver this vision, including Internet Service Providers, mobile phone companies, online search companies and many others. The Government believes that the BBC and Channel 4, as public service institutions, have a particular important role to play – using their content, services, brands and reach to showcase the benefits of online participation.

62. In particular, the Government welcomes the appointment of the BBC's Online Access Champion and the increasing role of the BBC in driving Digital Participation. This means more than just creating content to attract those that are already online. It means providing an important function in helping to attract those not online.

The success of public service programming in driving online participation

BBC's 'Who Do You Think You Are?'

Following the television series, 10% of viewers also accessed the BBC website bbc.co.uk/familyhistory and 61% of those were new users to family history on the web. There was also an 18% increase in first time visitors to the National Archive website as the BBC was showing the first series.

Channel 4's 'Embarrassing Bodies'

The response to C4's multiplatform initiative 'Embarrassing Bodies' – incorporating TV, web and mobile suggests Channel 4's role can be an effective motivator in increasing the depth of use of online services and educating people about health risks. Over ¼ million online STI Risk Checks have been taken and more than 2.5 million Self-Checks videos have been viewed on the site.

63. **We are inviting the Board of Channel 4 to consider how it can further contribute to driving Digital Participation, including consideration of whether Channel 4 should appoint a Digital Participation Champion from among its Senior Management Team.**

64. The new Consortium of Stakeholders provides an immediate and important vehicle for tackling Digital Participation. It brings together key stakeholders and Government departments to achieve greater coordination and collaboration. Whilst it will be able to bring greater coordination than currently exists, there may be a case for even clearer strategic leadership, coordination and rationalisation of current activity, requiring greater structural reform of Government and stakeholder activity.

65. In the medium term, a new, formal and more structured institution outside of Government is needed to deliver clear benefits above and beyond the Consortium approach. The new institution could replicate the delivery success of Digital UK in television switchover. In that role it would bind the most important stakeholders from across Government, industry and the third sector in a structure with a clearly defined remit, governance and funding arrangements. This is considered further in Chapter 8 as part of the wider consideration of how to deliver Digital Britain.

66. If Government does embrace structural reform of the institutions and processes, it will also need to consider its own interaction on these issues. Today, involvement is currently spread across a number of departments, including BIS, DCMS, DCSF, CLG, and others. There may be scope for developing a more efficient approach to Government activity in this area.

67. This plan to drive Digital Participation in the UK is designed to ensure that everyone can share in the benefits of a Digital Britain. For them to do so, we will need to ensure the UK has a world class infrastructure that makes the services people want universally available. This is considered in the next Chapter.

CASE STUDY

Student: Adam Cunnington, Northampton University

Adam Cunnington, a 21-year-old undergraduate at Northampton, has a drawer full of obsolete technology: CD players, games consoles, mobile handsets and games consoles – all made redundant by the latest digital devices.

The student, studying for a degree in Business & Sport, has consolidated his electronic usage to a laptop and an iPhone. "The laptop gives me everything I need for my coursework, and the iPhone gives me Internet access from anywhere with email, instant messaging, maps, music and Facebook."

As part of the so-called "iPod generation", Adam expects his university to be similarly wired. He has not been disappointed. Every student on his course has access to "Tunis", a secure portal where they can discuss work with tutors, find lecture notes and check sources.

"The idea is to enable students to access all the material they need online," he says. "Not everyone is going to be able to go to lectures."

Adam uses the system to download lecture slides, while using another secure site – Metalib – to find book references, sources, specialist journals and background for assignments.

He cross-checks some of his assignments with friends on Facebook, which has replaced MySpace as the network of choice among his student group. But he also recommends entertainment sites such as Limewire or Bearshare, where Adam admits not all content is paid for.

Given the hours devoted to online coursework and social networking, the undergraduate acknowledges that digital can be a distraction. "I would get a lot more done if Facebook wasn't around, but it helps with just getting information," he adds. "And if mum's taken the SatNav, at least I can use the iPhone to check how to get to the next match."