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# The UK workforce digital skills gap

Why closing it matters  
and a roadmap for action

# Introduction

Our world is increasingly driven by digital.

Technology is at the heart of realising the UK's productivity strategy, but we are leaving people behind.

There are significant Essential Digital Skills gaps across the working population, in every sector, nation and region, and in every age group.

Artificial intelligence and automation are going to transform work. Urgent action is needed now by government and industry to boost the digital capability and confidence of the UK's workforce, and capitalise on the opportunities ahead.

This roadmap details the best next steps for government, business and civil society to boost the digital capability and confidence of the UK's workforce and ensure everyone has the Essential Digital Skills needed for work.

It is a joint publication with the Digital Skills Council and has been part funded by the Department for Science Innovation and Technology.

This roadmap is the culmination of what FutureDotNow has seen, learnt and done over the past four years, alongside our 200-plus members from large businesses, small and medium enterprises, not-for-profit organisations and local and national government.

We are now calling on government, business and civil society to come together and use their collective power to accelerate progress on this national issue.

## Navigating the roadmap

- The Essential Digital Skills gap and why it matters, read on from **page 2**
- The 20 Work tasks in the Essential Digital Skills Framework, see **page 9**
- Our three areas for action:
  - Strategy**, go to **page 13**
  - Delivery**, go to **page 21**
  - Culture**, go to **page 25**
- FutureDotNow and the report contributors, go to **page 31**

Today, almost 60% of the UK's workforce (23.4 million people) is unable to do all 20 digital tasks industry and government have defined as essential for work.

There are huge capability gaps hidden in plain sight, with many struggling to use the internet safely, access personal data such as payslips, and complete tasks that boost productivity, such as sharing files online.

This may not be surprising, given a prevailing narrative that suggests we should all be able to acquire digital skills instinctively by using technology.

But the data shows that skills are not acquired organically. Even though the pandemic accelerated digital upskilling, people are not building the full suite of digital essentials, leaving themselves, their employers and the UK exposed to the risks of online harms and missing out on vital opportunities.

This challenge affects every one of us and has never been more important to address. The pace at which technology is changing means even those who are digitally capable today are at risk of becoming digitally and economically excluded tomorrow.

Transitioning the working population to being truly digitally confident is not a simple task. It requires decisive action and a shift in mindset.

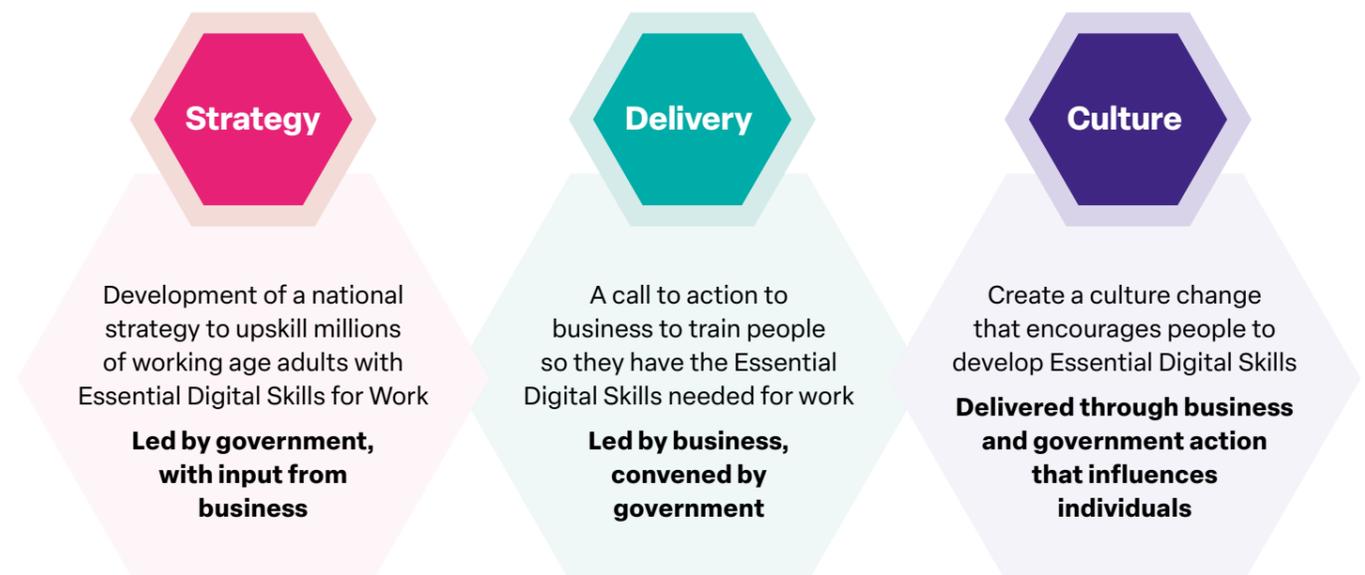
It would be false to suggest there hasn't been any action to date. The UK has excellent policy foundations on which to build. But the current position is haphazard, lacking strategic ambition and coordination, after decades of focus elsewhere.

In this roadmap, we lay out three headline areas for action. There is a relationship between each, as improvements in one will increase the likelihood of success in others. Addressing all three will deliver a multiplier effect.

In each area, we propose the best next steps for policy makers and business leaders to take now. However, this cannot be a linear plan. It will need constant review and refinement to mirror the pace of technological change.

The prize at the end is monumental for the UK, business and individuals.

## Three areas for action



This diagram summarises the key headlines and the 10 recommendations for action.



## Challenge

**59%**

of the UK workforce that is unable to do all of the digital tasks essential for work<sup>1</sup>

**£145 billion**

UK's potential loss of cumulative GDP growth between 2018-2028 due to inadequate digital skills<sup>2</sup>

## The roadmap for action

### Strategy

Development of a national strategy to upskill millions of working age adults with Essential Digital Skills for Work

**Led by government, with input from business**

### Delivery

A call to action to business to train people so they have the Essential Digital Skills needed for work

**Led by business, convened by government**

### Culture

Create a culture change that encourages people to develop Essential Digital Skills

**Delivered through business and government action that influences individuals**

## Ambition

**UK workforce digitally capable and confident**

with every member able to do all 20 of the digital tasks essential for work

1

Establish a national ambition

2

Own & promote a common language & framework

3

Increase awareness of the digital skills gap

4

Galvanise business

5

Equip business to act

6

Monitor, coordinate & report on progress

7

Leverage the common language & framework

8

Assess digital skills of the workforce

9

Help the workforce build digital skills

10

Gather evidence on how to motivate people

## Why we need to take urgent action

Building a workforce powered up with essential digital capability and confidence is critical to creating a higher skilled economy. It could unlock prosperity for millions, improve business productivity and is a key foundation to realising the UK's ambitions as a global technology and science superpower.

Conversely, not acting now will leave the UK and the workforce underpowered. More than 80% of the people who will be of working age in 2030 are already part of the UK's workforce<sup>3</sup>. Building their digital capability and confidence is critical now.

Of course, not everyone who gets the digital basics will progress onto advanced digital roles. But no one can do so without them. And when a business does equip employees with Essential Digital Skills, great results can occur.

Building the base of onshore talent will help to ease labour shortages. For example, Heathrow Airport has seen its talent pool grow significantly, with former secretaries and security guards now in higher skilled tech roles, following investment in Essential Digital Skills training. Building digital capability is critical to opening the labour market and closing acute job shortages.

At the other end of the scale, how do you find and apply for a job if you haven't got the digital basics? Starkly, a fifth of working age adults who are not in work can't do any of the 20 work tasks defined as essential by industry and government<sup>1</sup>. Yet 82% of today's jobs require digital skills<sup>4</sup>.

Current data estimates Essential Digital Skills gaps are costing the UK economy around £12.8 billion a year<sup>5</sup> and the UK risks losing £145 billion in cumulative GDP growth between 2018-2028 due to inadequate digital skills. In addition, workers are missing out on around £5.69 billion in additional earnings<sup>5</sup>. However, a full economic impact assessment will help us to understand the true figure, which is likely to be much higher.

Amidst the current cost of living crisis, we must not underestimate the importance of digital competence on people's entire lives. Whether accessing cheaper goods and services, engaging with healthcare or avoiding online harm and scams, digital underpins it all.

The true costs that result from a lack of digital capability are largely unquantified. But imagine the pressure that could be eased off from government services if everyone could engage with them digitally. A more digitised electorate will help to keep tax payer costs down.

Investing in building essential digital capability will enable the UK to future-proof jobs, raise productivity, increase talent and reduce cybersecurity risks. Above all, we can improve the confidence and agility of our workforce by taking action now.

“ We talk a lot about making the UK a science and technology superpower by 2030... but it means nothing if you do not have the customer or the skills base to use the products, never mind produce them in the first place.”

**Paul Scully MP**

Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy

(Digital Exclusion report: June 2023, House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee)

## The size of the UK's Essential Digital Skills gap

### UK labour force (circa 40.2 million)

**Skill view:** Proportion of the UK labour force who do not have/have Essential Digital Skills for Work



**Task view:** Proportion of the UK labour force and the number of work tasks they can do



### Different data points are often used to describe the Essential Digital Skills gap, which can mask the true scale of the issue.

The diagram above shows the difference between the Skill view and the Task view, as reported in the Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index 2022.

The Skill view shows 78% of the labour force have the Work EDS, this means 78% of people of working age (18+ but not retired) can do at least one task in each of the five skill categories. However, this may mean someone can do all 20 tasks, or it may mean they can do only 5 tasks. Both would be counted as 'having the Work EDS'.

A more transparent data point is the Task view. This gives the true picture of how many people of working age can do all 20 tasks, how many can do none, and how many can do some.

Data points from the Task view are used in this report.

- **41%** of working age adults can do all 20 Work tasks, leaving 59% (c. 23.4 million people) who would benefit from some targeted upskilling.
- **27%** (c. 10.9 million people) can do 17-19 tasks. With the right support, they could quickly do all 20.
- **8%** (c. 3.2 million people) cannot do any of the 20 work tasks.

The recent House of Lords report published on 29 June 2023, refers to a figure of c. 5.6 million adults lacking the Work skills<sup>6</sup>. For clarity, this data point uses the Skill view, and refers only to adults in work, not those of working age who are unemployed.

# The impact of the UK's Essential Digital Skills gap

Here is a summary of the impacts through different lenses. To find out more, we encourage you to read the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report.

## Which tasks do most people struggle with?

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Productivity is the number 1 skill gap</b>                                 | Using digital productivity tools, such as Slack and Microsoft Projects, is the number one essential digital task that people struggle with.  |
| <b>Cybersecurity – 4 of the top 10 skill gaps relate to being safe online</b> | Four out of the top 10 essential digital tasks that people cannot complete relate to cyber security, such as managing privacy settings on social media and updating software to prevent viruses and other risks. |

Go to page 51 to see the full top 10 of the essential digital tasks most people struggle with.

## Who is affected by the Essential Digital Skills gap?

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>Every industry</b>  | <p>The industry a person works in is the biggest predictor of their digital confidence and capability. People in all sectors have skill gaps.</p> <p>People who work in construction have the lowest levels of Essential Digital Skills, with only 25% able to do all 20 work tasks.</p> <p>But no sector is immune. 33% of people working in the tech sector don't have all 20 tasks.</p> |
| <b>Every region</b>    | In every nation and region of the UK at least 50% of the workforce cannot complete all 20 essential digital tasks for work.  |
| <b>Every age group</b> | <p>25-34 year-olds are the most digitally savvy, with 48% able to do all 20 tasks.</p> <p>Over 65s have the lowest level of capability, with only 23% able to do all 20 tasks.</p> <p>Despite the belief that young people are digital natives, 55% of 18-24 year-olds are unable to do all 20 tasks.</p>  |

## How is the UK affected by the gap?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>UK economy at risk of losing £145 billion</b> | <p>Due to inadequate digital skills in the UK's workforce, the UK is at risk of losing £145 billion in cumulative GDP growth between 2018-2028. This represents 0.5% of annual GDP growth.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>A full economic impact assessment will help us to understand the true figure, which is likely to be much higher.</p> |
|--|--|

All data from UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report, unless otherwise referenced.

## How might business experience the impact of the gap?

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Cyber breaches</b>   | <p>39% of businesses in the UK reported a cyber breach in 2022.<sup>7</sup></p> <p>Unsafe online behaviours by employees are making business extremely vulnerable to digital threats.</p>   |
| <b>Project failures</b> | <p>70% of digital transformation projects in businesses fail every year because of a lack of adoption and behaviour change by employees.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Building basic digital confidence and capability increases an individual's capacity to adapt to new technologies.</p> |
| <b>Labour shortages</b> | <p>Only 33% of people not in work can complete all 20 work tasks, but 82% of jobs require digital skills.<sup>9</sup></p> <p>This is preventing millions from applying for and securing jobs, which could help to fill labour shortages.</p>                                      |

## How are individuals impacted by the gap?

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>Personal prosperity</b> | UK workers who lack Essential Digital Skills are missing out on an estimated £5.69 billion in additional wages. <sup>5</sup>  |
| <b>Wellbeing</b>           | <p>Low digital skills often correlate with reduced mental, physical and financial wellbeing.</p> <p>Compared to people with high digital skills, people without Essential Digital Skills manage their money less effectively and struggle to access government and NHS services.<sup>10</sup></p> |



# The 20 work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework

Defined by industry and government as essential for work, there are 20 tasks all individuals should be able to complete, across five skill areas: handling information and content, communicating, transacting, problem solving and being safe and legal online.

## Handling information and content

1. **Follow my organisation's IT policies when sharing information internally and externally** (e.g. classifying emails/documents, encrypting sensitive information, sharing appropriate information on social media)
2. **Securely access, synchronise and share information at work across different devices** (e.g. manage email, calendar or appointment system via different devices)

## Communicating

3. **Communicate in the workplace digitally using messaging applications** (e.g. Email, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Slack, internal intranet, WhatsApp)
4. **Use workplace digital tools to create, share and collaborate with colleagues** (e.g. Microsoft Teams, OneDrive, G-Suite, Office 365, WeTransfer, DropBox, WebEx, Slack)
5. **Set up and manage an account on a professional online network/community/job site** (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed)

## Transacting

6. **Complete digital records on behalf of, or within my organisation** (e.g. absence management, holidays, timesheets, expenses, tax returns)
7. **Access salary and tax information digitally** (e.g. password protected payslips, P60, P45)

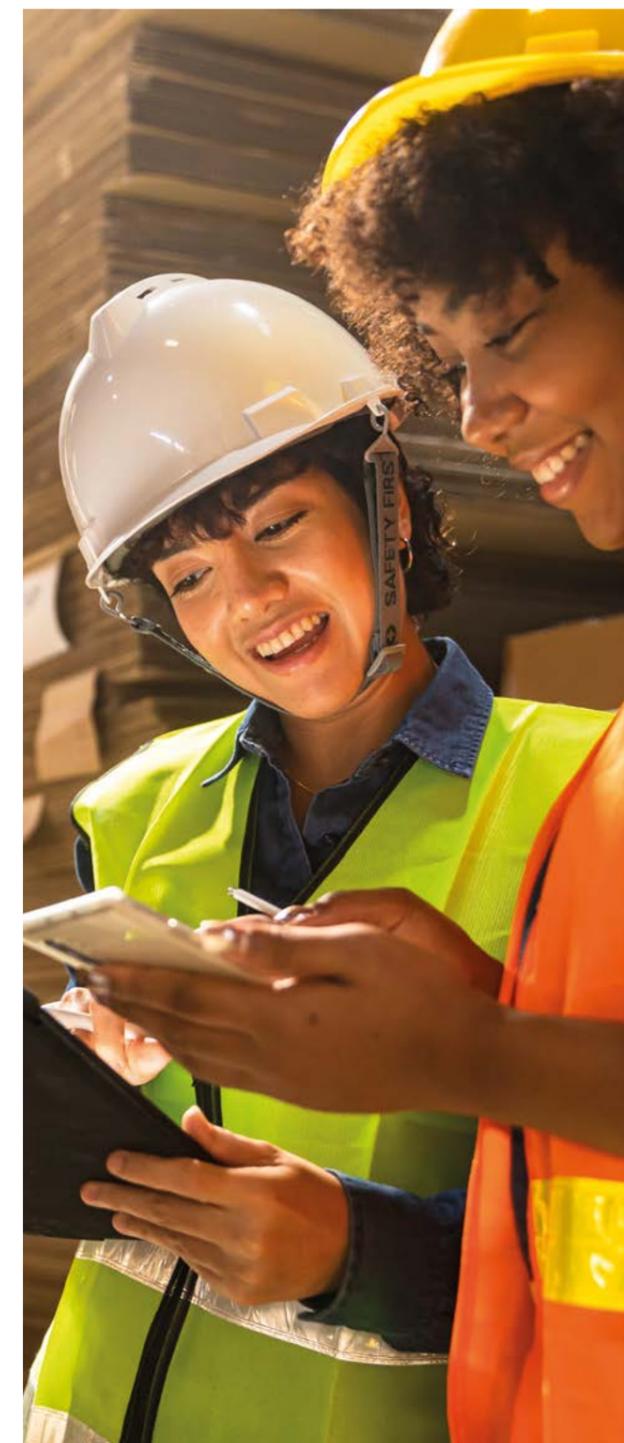
## Problem solving

8. **Find information online that helps me solve work related problems** (e.g. search engines, IT helpdesk, software providers, peer networks)
9. **Improve my skills and ability to do new things at work using online tutorials, learning platforms and how-to guides** (e.g. LinkedIn Learning, YouTube, iDEA, Skillsoft, internal learning platforms)
10. **Use appropriate software that is required of my day-to-day job** (e.g. spreadsheets, online booking systems, HR management, workflow or sales management)
11. **Improve my own and/or the organisation's productivity using digital tools** (e.g. Trello, Microsoft Projects and Planner, Slack)

## Being safe and legal online

12. **Act with caution online and understand that there are risks and threats involved in carrying out activities online** (e.g. use anti-virus software, classify and share information securely or avoid certain types of websites such as piracy websites)
13. **Follow data protection guidelines online** (e.g. following data storage and retention guidelines, not sharing or using other people's data or media such as movies or music without their consent)
14. **Recognise suspicious links and know that clicking on these links or downloading unfamiliar attachments is a risk** (e.g. spam/phishing emails, texts, pop ups)
15. **Be careful with what I share online as I know that online activity produces a permanent record that can be accessed by others** (e.g. publicly shared photos, forums, personal information or opinions)
16. **Respond to requests for authentication for online accounts** (e.g. resetting my password when I've forgotten it, two factor authentication, using a remote access key or an authenticator app)
17. **Identify secure websites** (e.g. by looking for the padlock and https in the address bar)
18. **Identify secure Wi-Fi networks to connect to** (e.g. Wi-Fi networks where a unique password is required, trusted source or padlock next to Wi-Fi network)
19. **Update my device software/operating systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks** (e.g. enabling automatic updates, or installing when prompted to do so)
20. **Set privacy and marketing settings for websites and my accounts** (e.g. managing social media privacy settings, managing cookie settings, updating contact preferences)

To find out more about the current scale of the workplace digital skills gap, see the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report – [www.futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report](http://www.futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report)





## The Roadmap for action

Over the next 15 pages, we set out the roadmap for action. This comprises 10 recommendations across three action areas.

### Strategy

**Development of a national strategy to rapidly upskill millions of working age adults with Essential Digital Skills for Work**

### Delivery

**A call to action to business to train employees so they have the Essential Digital Skills needed for work**

### Culture

**Create a culture change that encourages people to develop Essential Digital Skills**

# Strategy

## Development of a national strategy to rapidly upskill millions of working age adults with Essential Digital Skills for Work

### Recommendations for government and policy makers

To build the truly digital workforce that will land the UK's tech superpower ambitions, a national strategy and delivery plan is urgently needed to equip every working age adult with Essential Digital Skills, no matter what age they are or life stage they're at.

#### 1. Establish a national ambition

- Set a national ambition for essential digital capability and confidence in working age adults for the UK to coalesce around. This should be specific, measurable and time-bound.

#### 2. Own and promote a common language and framework

- Adopt the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework as the national minimum digital skill set needed by people of working age.
- The Essential Digital Skills framework to be owned by government.
- Government and industry to formally and regularly review the framework so it keeps pace with technological advances.

#### 3. Increase awareness of the Essential Digital Skills gap

- Increase visibility of current data on the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK workforce.
- Close critical data gaps, including the economic impact of the essential digital skill gap in working age adults, to provide stronger evidence of the social and economic case for investment in digital skills.

#### 4. Galvanise business

- Use the convening power of government to galvanise businesses to equip employees with the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

#### 5. Equip business to act

- Create at least one best-in-class training resource for businesses to assess and equip their workforces with all the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

#### 6. Monitor, coordinate and report on progress

- Monitor and coordinate action and formally report on progress at a national level, to create greater visibility and accountability for progress.

FutureDotNow is the leading authority on the Essential Digital Skills of the UK's workforce. We have six recommendations for starting to build a national strategy to rapidly upskill millions of working age adults with Essential Digital Skills for work.

These are drawn from our work with our members and civil society partners, as well as engagement with government departments.

Throughout the UK, working age adults lack Essential Digital Skills needed for the jobs of today and the future. These skills are vital building blocks for everyone, from apprentices to chief executives, graduates to seasoned professionals.

These essential digital skills are critical to increasing productivity and efficiency in all sectors, advancing career opportunities and personal prosperity.

There's a clear opportunity to build on strong policy foundations such as the Essential Digital Skills Framework and the statutory digital entitlement.

These recommendations would sit at the heart of a strategy and delivery plan to upskill millions of workers with the digital essentials and would act as a clarion call to action across UK industry and policy makers.

Through a national strategy, government can convene, inspire and coordinate the efforts of individual departments, regional and local authorities, business and civil society and turbo charge progress.



“ The government must publish a new digital inclusion strategy and establish a new cross-government unit with direct input from Number 10.”

**Digital Exclusion report: June 2023**  
House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee

## Strategy: Detailed recommendations for government and policy makers

### 1. Establish a national ambition

- Set a national ambition for essential digital capability and confidence in working age adults for the UK to coalesce around. This should be specific, measurable and time-bound.

There is a general perception that working age adults will instinctively equip themselves with Essential Digital Skills. But this is at odds with reality. The pace of digital skill acquisition in the UK's workforce is slow. From 2019-2021 the number of people able to complete all work tasks increased by just four percentage points, from 28% to 32%.

But what gets measured gets done. National ambitions, such as net zero CO2 by 2050, create a common goal that can focus attention, accelerate change and drive collaboration.

We urgently need a national ambition for the Essential Digital Skills of working age adults, and for targets to be published.

Our recommendation is that this ambition should be specific, measurable and time-bound, and built around the work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework developed by industry and government.

Every member of the UK's workforce should be able to complete all 20 essential digital tasks for Work. Adding a target date for this is vital to focus efforts and accelerate progress.

### 2. Own and promote a common language and framework

- Adopt the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework as the national minimum digital skill set needed by people of working age.
- The Essential Digital Skills Framework to be owned by government.
- Government and industry to formally and regularly review the framework so it keeps pace with technological advances.

One of the major challenges with digital is that it means different things to different people. Common language and clear definitions of skills deliver specificity in this complex landscape.

Originally created by industry and the Department for Education in 2018, the Essential Digital Skills Framework sets the standards and terminology for Essential Digital Skills necessary for work today.

Using this existing framework consistently could be a significant game changer. It is an asset waiting to be fully realised and is already highly regarded on an international level.

The work skills it outlines should be adopted as the national minimum digital skill set for working adults.

This will make it easy for everyone to understand what is meant by Essential Digital Skills, what gaps are present and what action needs to be taken.

Today, the framework is not well-known or being used consistently across government, industry or civil society. A contributing factor could be that ownership of the framework is unclear.

Our view is that the framework is a national asset that should be owned by government and published on its website, as the national standard.

We recommend government should lead a regular review of the Essential Digital Skills for Work in partnership with industry to ensure the skills keep pace with technological advances and the needs of business.

### 3. Increase awareness of the Essential Digital Skills gap

- Increase visibility of current data on the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK workforce.
- Close critical data gaps, including the economic impact of the Essential Digital Skills gap in working age adults, to provide stronger evidence of the social and economic case for investment in digital skills.

The UK has a significant asset in the data collected and published annually by Lloyds Bank in the UK Consumer Digital Index and the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report (published in partnership with FutureDotNow for the first time in March 2023).

This provides a clear snapshot of the digital capability and confidence of working age adults.

Currently, awareness of this vital data is not as high as it should be. As a result, it's imperative the data is made much more visible within government, business and civil society. One way the government could do this is by making the data part of formal national metrics.

The Office of National Statistics and the recently established Unit for Future Skills within the Department for Education are likely to be key players in finding solutions to this visibility challenge, alongside the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology.

Whilst the UK Consumer Digital Index provides data on the economic benefits for individuals from Essential Digital Skills, action is also needed to close critical data gaps including commissioning an economic impact assessment of the essential digital skill gap in working adults.



## Strategy: Detailed recommendations for government and policy makers

### 4. Galvanise business

- Use the convening power of government to galvanise businesses to equip employees with the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

Today, most businesses do not invest in programmes that aim to build the basic digital capability and confidence of their workforce, but focus investment on equipping employees with advanced digital skills to fill immediate and critical talent gaps.

Our work over the past four years has revealed that this lack of investment in Essential Digital Skills training is often because businesses are unaware that their employees do not have basic digital capability.

Another common narrative is that businesses believe their workforces can develop Essential Digital Skills through the use of technology.

To increase investment in Essential Digital Skills training, government must use its convening power to galvanise businesses to equip their employees with the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

Taking action will require business to invest money, time and resources. Particularly in the current economic climate, external incentives, financial or otherwise, should be made available to help businesses prioritise Essential Digital Skills training for their employees.

Incentives can take many forms. From including workforce Essential Digital Skills training in activity funded under the skills levy and tax relief, to accepting as a social value activity in public sector bids. These types of actions send an important signal on the value placed by national, regional and local government on this activity.



### 5. Equip business to act

- Create at least one best-in-class training resource for businesses to assess and equip their workforces with the work skills outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

Today, there is no 'anchor' training content source for business to use to help people build their basic digital skills. FutureDotNow's work over the past four years has revealed it needs to be easy for business to help people build these essential skills. This is not currently the case.

There's an abundance of digital skills training material created by individual organisations without any overarching strategy. This has led to the development of fragmented and competing content and significant gaps.

UK businesses need at least one best-in-class training resource they can use to assess and build the core digital capability and confidence of their employees, starting with the Essential Digital Skills for Work.

There is an opportunity for Essential Digital Skills to be at the heart of a digital training solution that facilitates upskilling in the 20 tasks. Our work with members shows there is appetite from business to play a role in shaping this solution.

### 6. Monitor, coordinate and report on progress

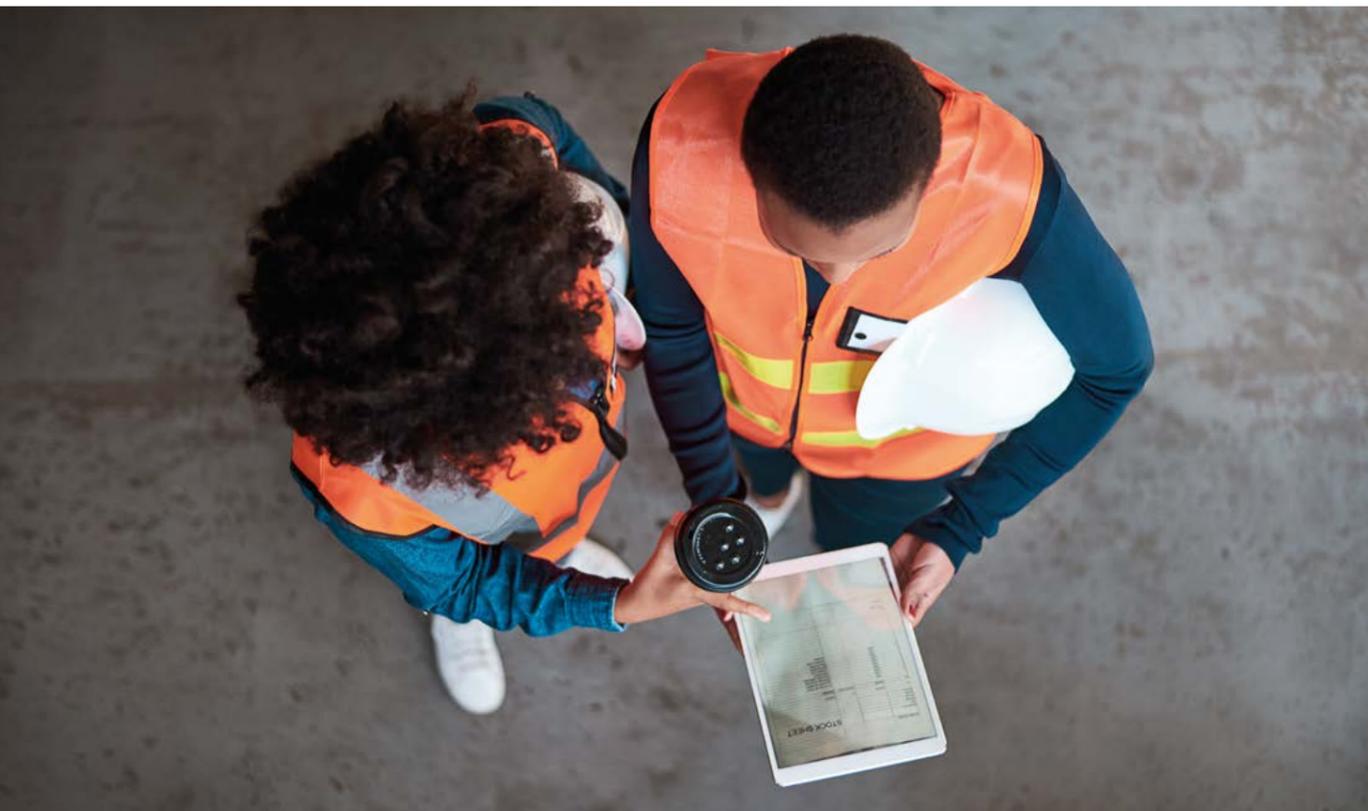
- Monitor and coordinate action and formally report on progress at a national level, to create greater visibility and accountability for progress.

Any strategy to uplift the digital capability and confidence of the nation will require a robust delivery plan; one that distils action into clear next steps, with clear goals, roles and responsibilities.

Delivery will require collective action, where stakeholders across government, industry and civil society come together with a shared objective.

Many actions will interconnect; others can progress more discretely.

As a result, it will be critical to monitor and coordinate action and formally report on progress at a national level. This will require the allocation of appropriate funding and resources.





## Personal story

**Caroline Mbagaya,**  
Data and Machine Learning,  
Lloyds Banking Group

**Hear from Caroline about how her Essential Digital Skills training has hugely benefitted her at work and at home.**

I started at Lloyds as a customer service adviser, on the telephone, answering queries.

I then trained to be a mortgage adviser, but at the back of my mind I always wanted to go into the digital world.

I have a biochemistry degree, and I did a Masters in public health. A lot of it involved analysing data, which I really enjoyed.

I did try to apply for roles at the bank that used my skills, but there was always a gap. I had no real digital skills, and I knew I had to change this.

When I was working on a mortgage application one day, I saw an advert from Lloyds about it looking to reskill people to go into digital engineering.

I thought this might be the perfect opportunity for me, so I quickly put in an application. I got selected and joined a bootcamp for 12 weeks. I was pretty much trained in every basic digital skill.

After the training, it felt like a new world had been opened up to me. First of all, I joined a team whose responsibilities include running servers and managing some of Lloyds' websites and portals.

Then, I saw a role that had a lot more to do with data and successfully applied for that. Waking up each morning and doing a job you love is a great feeling.

Thanks to my reskilling, I'm earning more, which is really helping with the cost of living. I feel like I'm utilising my knowledge and skills more. And things I've learnt at work are benefiting me in my daily life.

Now, I'm more aware of and confident at managing my passwords. And with the children, when they're on their iPads, I can offer more guidance to keep them and our family safe.

**"Thanks to my reskilling, I'm earning more, which is really helping with the cost of living."**



## Delivery

# A call to action to business to train employees so they have the Essential Digital Skills needed for work

## Recommendations for business

Employers are uniquely placed to help their employees build Essential Digital Skills, and some organisations are already doing so.

FutureDotNow is now calling on all businesses to build their employees' Essential Digital Skills.

Three recommendations are set out below, which are drawn from our work with members and civil society partners over the past four years. There are supporting resources, listed in the appendix, that can help business to move quickly.

### 7. Leverage the common language of the Essential Digital Skills Framework

We encourage all businesses to leverage the framework to help people build Essential Digital Skills.

### 8. Assess the Essential Digital Skills of your workforce

We are calling on all businesses to assess the current digital capability and confidence levels of their workforce.

### 9. Help your workforce to build the Essential Digital Skills for Work

We're calling on all businesses to actively help people grow their core digital skills and ensure they can do at least the 20 work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

With 59% of the UK's workforce (23.4 million people) unable to do all 20 digital tasks essential for work<sup>1</sup>, this is a challenge that affects every business, sector and region in the UK.

Employers are uniquely placed to help their employees build Essential Digital Skills. The 2021 Consumer Digital Index reported that 57% of workers would find it easiest to learn new digital skills through work<sup>10</sup>.

Yet in 2020, only 23% of employers were offering basic digital skills training<sup>11</sup>; and only 41% of SMEs arranged or funded any type of training for employees in 2021, the lowest rate since 2010<sup>12</sup>.

When it comes to tackling this, there's no one-size-fits-all solution.

Some organisations are working top-down, with CEO-sponsored upskilling programmes that are core to business strategy. Some are working bottom-up, weaving digital skills training into existing development programmes. While others are using the strength of organisational networks to create a culture of peer-coaching and learning on the job.

In the appendix of this document are examples of training models that do work, as well as first-hand accounts from some of the organisations that have adopted them.

FutureDotNow has developed resources that can help, whether that's assessing the Essential Digital Skills gap in the workforce or designing a training programme. A summary of them is in the appendix.

Building Essential Digital Skills is an investment that has the potential to improve job performance, advance careers, address talent gaps, boost health and wellbeing, and, ultimately, increase productivity and income for individuals.



pwc

“Unlocking people's capability in a digital world has been more significant than any other lever on productivity for our firm.”

**Ben Higgin,**  
Head of Technology and Investments, UK, PwC

## Delivery: Detailed recommendations for business

### 7. Leverage the common language of the Essential Digital Skills Framework

The Essential Digital Skills Framework sets the standards and terminology for 20 essential digital tasks necessary for work today. It's an excellent resource every business can use.

A major challenge with digital skills is specificity. It's a broad and wide subject matter with the word 'digital' potentially encompassing so much.

The framework creates clarity and simplicity at the essential digital skill level. It provides a common language and specific skill definitions.

We encourage all employers to leverage the framework across their business to help people build Essential Digital Skills.

### 8. Assess the Essential Digital Skills of your workforce

Many businesses across the UK are not aware of the true size of the Essential Digital Skills gap present in their organisation and the impact it may be having.

We are calling on all businesses to assess the current digital capability and confidence levels of their workforce. Whether you're looking to get an indicative view or one specific to your business, there are resources that can help.

The data in the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report gives a helpful steer. It provides data by age, geography, sector and other useful characteristics that can give you an indication of the likely gap.

The top 10 Essential Digital Skills that people struggle with are also revealing. Online safety is the standout skill gap, with over a quarter of the workforce (10.7 million people) struggling to set privacy settings on social media<sup>1</sup>.

FutureDotNow's four workforce personas in our 2022 Unpacking the Hidden Middle report<sup>13</sup> are another way to identify what skills are likely to be missing from key groups in your business.

See Appendix C for more information on what's available.

### 9. Help your workforce to build the Essential Digital Skills for Work

We're calling on all businesses to actively help people grow their core digital skills and ensure they can do at least the 20 work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

Our work with members has shown that there are many different ways businesses can help people upskill. From Marks & Spencer embarking on a big bang culture shift to Travis Perkins embedding Essential Digital Skills training in existing learning and development programmes.

In Appendix B, we showcase training models that some of our members are currently using. FutureDotNow resources designed to help are in Appendix C.

These include our complete guide to setting up and running your own Essential Digital Skills programme and our directory of members who offer training and other support.

### Personal story

**Billy Carrick,**  
Customer Care Leader  
and Digital Lead, Barclays

**Hear from Billy about how the development of his Essential Digital Skills has led to career progression and a new confidence.**

When I joined Barclays as a cashier, I was 21. I felt I should have had very good digital knowledge and skills at the time, but that wasn't the case.

I'd studied IT at school, and I'd been a team leader at well-known bakery brand for a couple of years but the only digital area of my role was helping customers with the brand's app.

I also had a personal smartphone and other tech as you'd expect but I'd never developed any real skills around using them.

In my new role at Barclays, digital felt like a whole new world. I didn't feel particularly confident using it and I think I was initially quite quiet at work because of this.

Over the past four years I've gradually built up my digital skills through our internal digital skills platform.

You can do a whole range of training modules, such as learning about different devices, to get badges.

I've also had excellent support from our Digital Eagles and started to upskill myself through our external platform, Digital Wings. Something I mainly do out of work hours, to help with my personal development.

Now, I'm a customer care leader and a digital lead at Barclays. When it comes to digital I really feel I've grown so much and become really passionate about supporting others. My current role is all about helping my colleagues in Northumberland and Durham support other people digitally.

I'm also working on initiatives to support Barclays colleagues working in the community to help people face-to-face with basic digital skills, as well as online banking and the Barclays app.

Personally, I've increased my confidence and I'm always pushing myself to learn more. For me, this has made a big difference at work and in my personal life.

As with many of us, I have quite a few older relatives that I've now gone on to support digitally. I enjoy helping them with things like video calls and helping my gran set up online shopping. It's really rewarding to be able to help people with small changes, that make a huge difference to their lives.

**"In my new role at Barclays, digital felt like a whole new world."**



 **BARCLAYS**



## Culture

### Create a culture change that encourages people to develop essential digital skills

#### Recommendations for business, government and civil society

FutureDotNow is calling on business, government, and civil society to work together to accelerate understanding and insight into the cultural aspects of workforce digital transformation to unlock scale impact. Specifically, work is needed to understand how to motivate people to want to build their digital capabilities.

#### 10. Gather evidence on how to motivate people

Today, little is known about what motivates people to invest time in building digital skills and what might be unintentionally acting as barriers. Today's cultural norms may make it difficult for people to recognise and talk about their needs, and there is no insight into the stages an individual might go through to become digitally confident.

Many organisations have invested in helping people build lower-level digital skills, yet there is little published best practise.

Government could start this process by commissioning behavioural insights research into the required culture change, including collating insights from organisations who have already invested in this work to date.

**There are two other areas that we recommend be part of any culture change programme.**

- **Inspire workforce with a compelling narrative**

Whilst our focus is on Essential Digital Skills for Work, the individuals we are seeking to motivate have lives outside work. Today, many organisations invest in marketing to encourage people to build their digital skills, but each organisation uses different language and rationales, from staying safe or saving money, to making the most of a new product.

We recommend government uses its convening power to bring private and public sector organisations together to explore how messaging could be more coordinated, to encourage working age adults to upskill. Ideally leading to the development of a compelling national narrative and call to action similar to the 'Five a Day' healthy eating campaign.

- **Ensure individuals are aware what digital skills are essential and make it easy for them to build them.**

Currently, the Essential Digital Skills aren't well known to individuals, so people often don't know what they are missing, and there's so much digital skill training content, that even motivated individuals struggle to know where to start. As organisations like Nationwide have discovered, a structured learning pathway is key to helping people progress.

One solution could be to develop an open-source digital solution that enables an individual to assess their starting point and follow curated pathways to close any gaps. This could be an area for government and business collaboration, building on the Department for Education's Skills Toolkit.

Transitioning the UK to a digital first society where everyone is equipped with the digital essentials, and confidence and desire to keep learning, will require a significant cultural shift.

Today, there is limited collective insight into the cultural side of workforce digital upskilling. How people feel, what might be unintentionally holding back progress, and how we can work together to motivate people to build skills are key aspects to understand.

Driving digital culture change across the workforce could be a game-changer, potentially multiplying the impact of the other recommendations set out in this roadmap.

The evidence to date shows most people need help and incentives to pick up the fundamentals of technology. And that, in the main, people don't recognise the need or the personal benefits they can realise.

Essentially, this is about culture. Turning digital confidence and capability into a desirable thing, something that people want to have, don't feel scared by, and feel energised by the benefits and opportunities.

This is not something any single organisation can address in isolation. Our work with business has

identified an opportunity to look at the digital skills challenge through a more holistic lens, across the whole workforce rather than on a company-by-company basis. Realising a significant cultural shift is a critical part of delivering the required change at pace and scale.

As a first step, more insight is needed on what works to motivate people to build digital skills and to want to keep learning. There's an untapped opportunity for business and government to come together to gather evidence and explore how to build personal motives for digital capability in the working population.



M&S  
EST. 1884

“When it comes to driving positive and meaningful change, we're big believers that we must all work together – which is why we're a proud member of FutureDotNow.”

**Suzanne Howse**  
Marks & Spencer

## Personal story

**James Prince,**  
Manager of Wimborne Library, Dorset

**Hear from James about how his Essential Digital Skills training is benefitting himself, his colleagues and the people he serves.**

I was one of the first people to attend the embedded digital champion training offered by Dorset Council.

It involves completing online modules focused on Essential Digital Skills. The aim of the training is to improve your skills and give you the confidence to support the people you help in the community.

For me, the training has been an enormously useful thing. It's improved our library's offer to the public. It was a great learning experience. And it was a great eye opener too.

Now, I'm a great deal more responsive and more aware of people's digital needs. It's become so much more apparent how much assistance some people need with the digital aspects of their life, and how excluded they feel if they're not able to access digital successfully or confidently.

The training has also made me a great deal more confident about helping people with any digital problems they may be facing.

Obviously, I don't have the answer for everything. But the training taught me a progressive and empathetic approach when speaking to customers, so I feel more confident in trying to find the answer together.

The development of my Essential Digital Skills has also had a knock-on effect on the rest of the team at the library.

We all have increased general awareness of the digital needs of people coming through our door. And obviously these needs can be very wide and varied, because it can be literally anything that comes through a library door in terms of an enquiry.

On top of this, the team is now much more inclined to share new knowledge about digital or technology, so it benefits us as individuals, our team and the wider public as well.

**“Now, I'm a great deal more responsive and more aware of people's digital needs.”**





## Next Steps

In this roadmap we have set out three areas for action to build a digitally capable and confident workforce with every member able to do all 20 digital tasks essential for work:

- The need for a national strategy to rapidly upskill millions with the Essential Digital Skills, to be led by government with input from business.
- A call for business to lead on delivery by taking three key actions to upskill their employees. This should be led by business, alongside the convening power of government.
- And a call for collective action, across government, business and civil society, to help build understanding of what it will take to change culture.

Building on the expertise garnered since its conception in 2019, FutureDotNow, with the cumulative experience and power of its members, is ideally positioned to support government and business leaders to mobilise the recommendations in this roadmap.

The recommendations are interconnected, and delivery will require collaboration across all sectors.

In the coming months, it will be important to identify, and secure commitment from, key players to drive forward these recommendations. Each recommendation will require specific outcomes and goals, with clear success measures and milestones for each area.

Please let us know how you would like to be involved, and where you can play your part. Please contact us at [hello@futuredotnow.uk](mailto:hello@futuredotnow.uk)

## About FutureDotNow

FutureDotNow is the leading authority on the Essential Digital Skills of the UK's workforce. Since 2019, we've greatly increased understanding of the Essential Digital Skills gap that's at the heart of business and the economic and social opportunities before us.

As part of this work, we've established a coalition of industry leaders dedicated to equipping every working age adult with Essential Digital Skills; developed reports and resources to support this action; and influenced government policy and the behaviour of other organisations.

Our expert understanding of the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK and partnerships with organisations across many sectors mean we're extremely well placed to narrate the challenge we face, provide authoritative insight, and put forward practical solutions to close the gap.

Our strong links with business leaders, policy makers and Essential Digital Skills experts from a wide range of organisations place us at the centre of a powerful network. We use this position to coordinate collective action, share learnings and resources, and connect organisations who can support each other.

Core to our mission is to influence business action, public policy and individual behaviour, all with the aim of accelerating long-term progress. Our campaigning work has anchored the topic of Essential Digital Skills in the UK government's digital strategy and made it one of the three priority workstreams for the Digital Skills Council.

We are now actively seeking strategic partners from across the private and public sector who can directly support our work.

## Become a member of FutureDotNow

We encourage you to join our movement and be part of an inspiring and rewarding effort to close the Essential Digital Skills gap.

All our members are committed to closing the Essential Digital Skills gaps in their workforces and across the UK.

We help them to do this by providing a supportive environment where organisations can share their experiences and learn from each other.

Traditionally, many of our members are competitors, but on the issue of digital skills they regularly work with each other to increase industry and government understanding and accelerate progress across the country.

**Join FutureDotNow at [futuredotnow.uk/join-us](https://futuredotnow.uk/join-us)**

**Or if you'd like to discuss membership or have any other queries, please contact us at [hello@futuredotnow.uk](mailto:hello@futuredotnow.uk)**



“ Digital is the most powerful tool to revolutionise our businesses and benefit our workforce. I hope this roadmap will inspire you to take action to improve the digital confidence and capability of all working age adults in the UK.

And if you're not already part of FutureDotNow, please join our community. By working together, we are in a much stronger position to ensure everyone prospers.”

**Liz Williams, MBE,**  
Chief Executive, FutureDotNow

“ The gap in basic digital capability in the UK's workforce is real and huge. It presents both risk and opportunity. It's holding the nation back, affecting productivity and business resilience at a time when the economic outlook is challenging and the nation is looking for answers. We need to take action now.”

**Sir Peter Estlin,**  
Chair, FutureDotNow

## Thank you



This FutureDotNow report has been produced by Liz Williams MBE, Holly Chate and Chris Andersson, with support from across the FutureDotNow team. We'd like to thank all the individuals and organisations who have generously given their time and expertise to support the production.

In particular our Board members and the organisations they represent; the Digital Skills Council, and officials from the Department for Science, Technology and Innovation; the Department for Education; the Department for Work and Pensions; and the Cabinet Office.

We would also like to express our thanks to Deloitte for providing a project manager to coordinate the production as well as their wider engagement with our mission.

Finally, we'd like to thank all the member companies of FutureDotNow who have informed and shaped our understanding of the Essential Digital Skills challenge and whose experiences are reflected in these recommendations.



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## Appendices

### On the following pages, you will find:

#### **Appendix A:** Summary of the pace of change in technology vs. Essential Digital Skills

An illustration of the rate of technological change and adoption across society as the rate at which people gain the digital basics fails to keep up.

#### **Appendix B:** Approaches to Essential Digital Skills training

An overview of five of the most popular approaches adopted by organisations to equip employees with the digital basics. Each one of these is complemented by a case study of a FutureDotNow member that is currently using this type of approach.

- Big bang culture shift: For organisations looking to have rapid and far-reaching change in their organisation, leading to employees and the organisation benefitting quickly from upskilling.
- Embedded learning: For organisations looking to gradually build up the Essential Digital Skills of their employees and change its culture.
- Peer support: For organisations who have a strong focus internally on people and building relationships.
- Learning partner: For organisations who may not have the in-house knowledge, skills or capacity to deliver an Essential Digital Skills learning programme.
- Trailblazer: For organisations looking to have a big and visible impact on colleagues and customers.

#### **Appendix C:** FutureDotNow resources

Tools, reports, guides, and templates developed with our member companies, to help build workforce Essential Digital Skills.

#### **Appendix D:** The Essential Digital Skills reporting landscape

How we define Essential Digital Skills and how the gap has been measured, including key data from the most recent research.

#### **Appendix E:** Timeline of national action on Essential Digital Skills

A short history of the work of government and other stakeholders to tackle digital capability and confidence for UK adults.

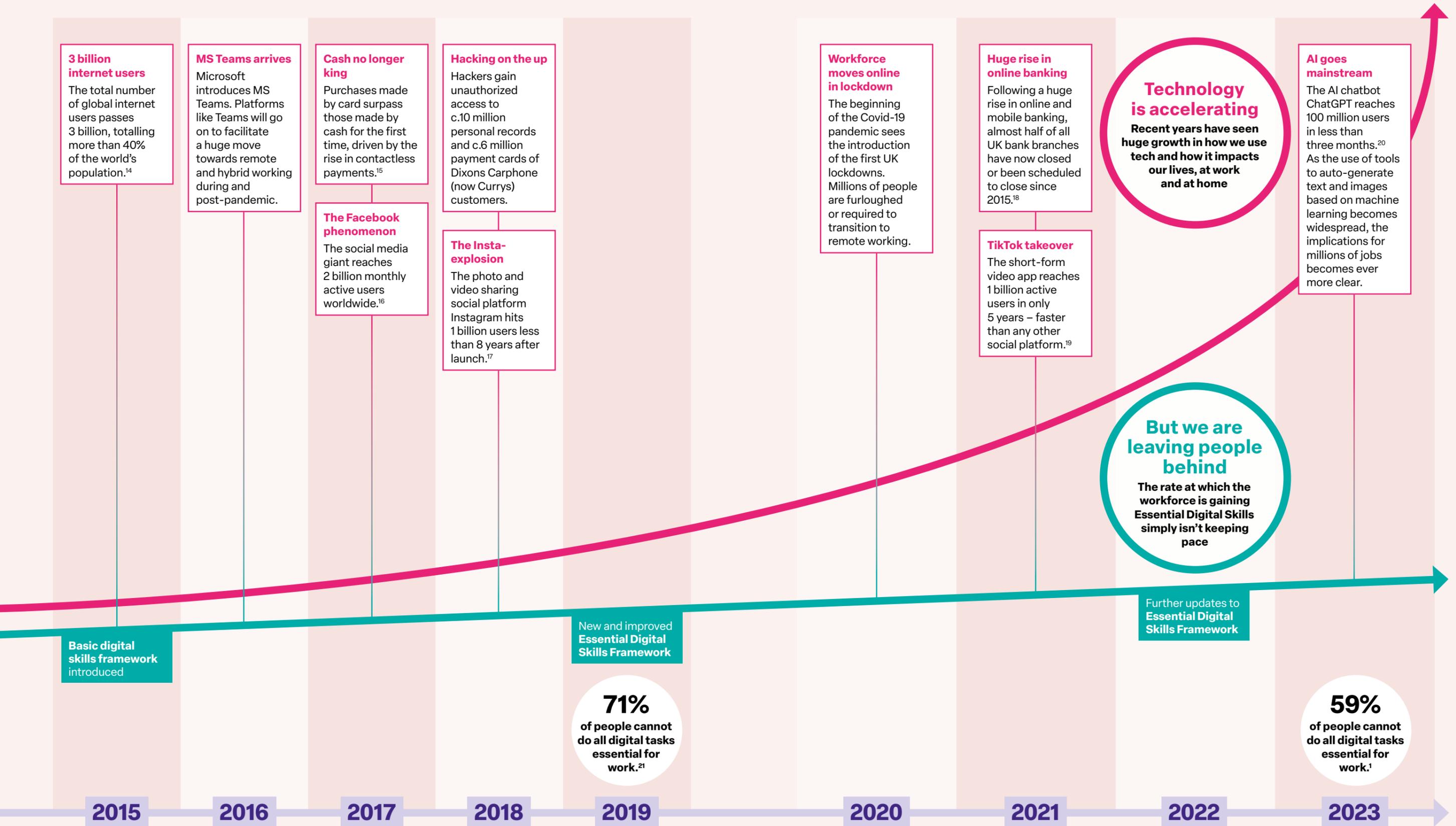
#### **Appendix F:** The statutory digital entitlement

A diagram from the Department for Education that illustrates how the Essential Digital Skills Framework forms the basis of the national standards for Essential Digital Skills, which in-turn inform the qualifications available to all UK adults.

# Appendix A: Summary of the pace of change in technology vs. Essential Digital Skills

## Technology is accelerating but people are not keeping up

Key:  
█ Technology growth  
█ Skills growth





M&S  
EST. 1884

## Big bang culture shift

### Who it's for

Businesses wanting rapid and far-reaching organisational change, leading to employees and the organisation benefitting quickly from upskilling.

### What it involves

- Commitment from the top to build basic digital skills at every level.
- Immersive engagement events that convene colleagues from all departments and levels. These sessions build awareness of the link between digital skills and business strategy and heighten motivations to upskill.
- Training focuses on why digital matters to individual and business, and gives people tools and motivation to develop their skills. Participants are encouraged to continue learning after the session, and supported to develop a digital mindset.

### Delivery method

- Face-to-face events bring together a wide range of colleagues, build excitement and interest, break down barriers associated with digital, and inspire people to build their skills.
- Post-event access to learning resources.

### Potential benefits

- High success rates – most participants report increased digital confidence. Organisations see better uptake of company tech and fewer IT helpdesk calls.
- Company-wide programme demonstrates importance of the initiative and creates a positive environment for change.
- Consistent training for everyone.

### Level of sponsorship required

C-suite

Cost: £ £ £

### Organisations using this model

M&S  
EST. 1884

### Training model in practice



**Lynsey Marshall,**  
Head of Adoption –  
Digital and Data

### Hear from Lynsey on how M&S is engaging all its employees with digital and equipping them with essential skills.

Digital is at the heart of M&S's whole proposition. Our customers expect us to offer value through digital experiences and services, and driving growth in our business requires our colleagues to work smarter, enabled by digital and data. So, about 18 months ago, with support from our co-CEO, Katie Bickerstaffe, we started to think about the broader digital skills of our colleagues and whether they were in a position to support our ambitions and our customers.

At the same time, we joined FutureDotNow and really engaged with its Hidden Middle report. It clearly shows the digital skills gaps in the UK's workforce and the huge benefits of filling these. This gave us a vital footing with senior stakeholders, and brought to life the need for investment in this area beyond what we were already doing to drive data skills and ways of working through our BEAM Academy.

On the back of this, we held listening groups and conducted surveys to really understand what it's like on the frontline. It's very easy for us sitting outside of that environment to think 'you've got your tablet, you've got your app, you've got Teams, you're okay'.

We quickly discovered we were in a place that mirrored what was in the Hidden Middle report. Colleagues told us they weren't engaged with digital because they didn't feel it was relevant to their roles and the training we were offering wasn't accessible, leaving them without skills and confidence.

Colleagues told us that for this topic, at this time in their journey, it needed to be face-to-face and practical to help them see and use digital differently. We knew we had to go big to support them in their roles and for them to better support our customers.

This led to us setting ourselves the challenge of delivering face-to-face training to every one of our 50,000 store colleagues.

After testing and retesting our training, we have a workshop colleagues have told us is making a difference. It allows them to work through their challenges with devices in hand, covering best practice. We've also made sure people from all areas and all levels of the business attend the training to show it's for everyone and a good investment of time. We've designed and delivered in-person programmes for store managers and colleagues, distribution managers and operatives, and support centre teams – fostering more capable, confident colleagues in digital and data.

So far, we've seen a 90% increase in colleagues saying they feel extremely confident digitally – and we're not done. This programme is kickstarting longer digital development journeys that are more bespoke to individuals, and we've seen much more engagement with our wider digital training offer with 26,000 learning sessions taking place this year, compared to 14,000 last year. Colleagues have told us that doing the training has given them the confidence around broader life skills, such as applying for management training programmes.

“ Our ambition is to move fast because digital is changing all the time.”

### What's your advice to others?

- Use external research, such as that undertaken by FutureDotNow, to help senior stakeholders understand the Essential Digital Skills challenge your business may be facing.
- Carry out internal research to understand the levels of digital skills and confidence of your workforce and the digital challenges they face.
- Get your employees to test and retest your training so you can learn from their feedback and keep improving your training offer.
- To create a culture shift, make sure your leaders take part in training alongside more junior members of your workforce. This will help everyone to see that the training you're doing is important.

### How has FutureDotNow supported you?

- Data and insights from FutureDotNow reports have helped M&S understand the digital skills challenge we're facing and engage senior leaders with the issue.
- FutureDotNow membership and events have helped M&S raise their profile in this space, which is helping to change perceptions of our organisation.
- Networking opportunities have helped M&S to share knowledge and experiences with other organisations, something we previously struggled to do.



## Embedded learning

### Who it's for

Organisations looking to gradually build up the Essential Digital Skills of their employees and change its culture.

### What it involves

Looking at existing learning programmes and identifying how you can introduce an Essential Digital Skills component to it. Some organisations select key cohorts such as apprentices or new starters, others build this into annual performance and development conversations.

### Delivery method

- There is a variety of Essential Digital Skills training content available that can be incorporated into your existing training interventions. This content can be delivered online, face-to-face or through other channels.

### Potential benefits

- Gradually increasing understanding can lead to higher levels of engagement and proficiency over time.
- Relatively easy to implement, as it is an addition to existing programmes, rather than a new programme.
- Cost-effective because it builds on existing training, and many training resources are freely available.

### Level of sponsorship required

Human Resources team

Cost: £

### Organisations using this model



### Training model in practice



**Andy Rayner,**  
Director of Apprenticeships  
and Early Careers

### Hear from Andy on how Travis Perkins plc is embedding Essential Digital Skills training into its existing apprenticeship programmes.

Recently, I was at a Travis Perkins branch and I overheard a colleague saying he'd received some photos from a customer on WhatsApp about an issue he was struggling with. The colleague needed to get these photos off WhatsApp and send them by email to someone else, but he didn't know how to do this.

Other members of staff came to help him but none of them could get the photos onto email either. They had to wait until the one member of their team who was digitally confident came back to sort it all out, which he did in a few minutes. This is a prime example of the challenge we're facing at Travis Perkins plc.

We have a predominantly male, ageing workforce whose digital capability and confidence is low, and they can be pretty reluctant to take the necessary steps to change this. Also, we have customers who are increasingly using digital to contact us and talk about their needs.

What we're doing to tackle this challenge is maximise the potential of our apprenticeships. They run across our business and at all levels, from the shop floor to managing director level. Half of our apprentices are already in our business and are often looking to move to the next step in their careers. They also have an average age of 35.

Originally, whoever did an apprenticeship was given training on digital and data. What we witnessed at our branches and in other areas of our business was that these people became a reference point for their local team regarding digital skills. This meant digital knowledge and skills started to gradually and organically spread through Travis Perkins group.

After monitoring this, we decided we wanted to make this informal coaching a more structured part of our apprenticeships. So, from there, we started to work with FutureDotNow and speak to other members of its network about how best to do this.

*“ Digitally, we wouldn't be where we are now without the support of FutureDotNow.”*

The support we received really helped us to get our thinking in the right place. We have now successfully embedded digital skills training in the majority of our apprenticeship programmes.

It equips our apprentices with the specific digital skills they need and the coaching skills to provide face-to-face support to their colleagues. This support focuses on three key areas: building digital confidence, data entry and signposting to resources that meet a person's individual needs.

Overall, this training approach is really working for us. We know our digital capability as an organisation is growing at the right pace for our business, our colleagues and our customers.

Travis Perkins <sup>plc</sup>

### What's your advice to others?

- Embedding your Essential Digital Skills programme into your company's existing plans can increase the chance of adoption.
- Face-to-face training from a colleague can help to ease an employee's fears about digital, especially if they're an older member of your workforce.
- Slowly building up your workforce's understanding of digital can lead to higher levels of engagement and digital skills.
- Relating training to real-world tasks can help employees see the benefit of acquiring digital skills.

### How has FutureDotNow supported you?

- We've been connected with other members of FutureDotNow who have helped shape our training. These members include Asda, Barclays, M&S and Lloyds Bank.
- FutureDotNow introduced Travis Perkins plc to the Barclays Digital Eagles team, who have created bespoke pathways on its Digital Wings platform for our employees.
- Our membership and FutureDotNow events have helped Travis Perkins plc raise our profile in this space and become a digital skills leader in the construction supply sector.

### Peer support



#### Who it's for

Organisations who have a strong focus internally on people and building relationships.

#### What it involves

Training small groups of employees in Essential Digital Skills who share their knowledge with colleagues. These people are often referred to as digital champions or digital accelerators. They help colleagues build digital skills and overcome fears in day-to-day settings, and often encourage more efficient ways of working in local teams.

#### Delivery method

- After receiving their own training, digital champions provide informal or formal training and support to colleagues.
- Digital champions signpost colleagues to other sources of support.

#### Potential benefits

- Support from a colleague can inspire and encourage employees to learn.
- Eases pressure on Learning and Development and IT teams.
- Helps to unlock talent and gives digital champions the opportunity to build on their skills, knowledge and experience.
- Results in a meaningful learning experience.
- Strengthens working relationships.

#### Level of sponsorship required

C-suite

Cost: £

#### Organisations using this model



Travis Perkins



#### Training model in practice



**Sarah Brown,**  
Project Manager

### Hear from Sarah on how Dorset Council's embedded digital champions programme is improving Essential Digital Skills in the council and beyond.

We know some of our colleagues lack Essential Digital Skills, as well as other professionals and volunteers who work directly with people living in Dorset. We also know that the residents supported by Dorset Council and other organisations often struggle with digital tasks. For example, a member of our parking team might meet a resident who cannot download and use our parking app.

Because we are an organisation with limited budget and resources, a peer support model is a really good option for us when it comes to addressing these challenges. What we offer is free digital training that's based on the Essential Digital Skills Framework. It is available to all Dorset Council employees, as well as anyone who works directly with residents in the county. The training, which is online, typically takes 2.5 to 4 hours. Participants can choose to split the training over one to two weeks, depending on their level of digital confidence.

Right now, we have 746 embedded digital champions at Dorset Council who have attended the training. And we have 187 digital champions embedded in other organisations across Dorset. It's fair to say that most of these people are not IT wizards, but they have enough skills and knowledge to support a colleague or member of the public in the moment they are needed.

After someone has completed the training, we are keen to provide opportunities to continue their learning. We run monthly digital coffee breaks in which we update our champions' knowledge of new initiatives, have guest speakers such as Dorset Cyber Security Police, and provide opportunities to network.

For the individual champions, they benefit from increased digital skills and become more digitally capable and confident. In some cases, their workloads decrease, due to the increased digital skills of the people they support. The champions' increased digital skills may also lead to improved career opportunities.

*“ At FutureDotNow's Accelerate event, we found it inspirational to hear what other organisations are doing to upskill their workforces.”*

The benefits for Dorset Council and other organisations include greater productivity from their workforce, upskilled champions filling more advanced roles which require digital skills, and customers having more efficient and enjoyable experiences. Now, following the success of the embedded digital champions programme, we're looking at what future projects we can embark on. And what's really helping to inform this work is attending FutureDotNow events.

At Accelerate, it was great to hear what the likes of Marks & Spencer and Travis Perkins are doing. While smaller organisations approached us, because they are interested in what we are doing.

#### What's your advice to others?

- Get senior leaders to back your programme. Without it, you'll struggle to move forward.
- Recruit digital champions who are good communicators and motivated to help others.
- Gamification in a peer support programme, such as winning badges, can really encourage digital champions to do more.
- Collect data and feedback as part of your programme. The more you collect, the better your training will become.

#### How has FutureDotNow supported you?

- Put us in touch with Greater Manchester Combined Authority, which shared its expertise and essential digital training methods with us.
- By presenting evidence from FutureDotNow reports, we secure support for our programmes from senior leaders.
- Events such as Accelerate have provided us with opportunities to network and learn from other organisations.

### Learning partner



#### Who it's for

Organisations who may not have the in-house knowledge, skills or capacity to deliver an Essential Digital Skills learning programme.

#### What it involves

- Working with a partner organisation to upskill employees. This could involve trialling different ways of learning to see which works best.
- Digital champions signpost colleagues to other sources of support.

#### Delivery method

- Using a partner organisation's existing online platform and content. Ideally, this is mapped to 20 work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

#### Potential benefits

- The organisation and its employees benefit from the expert knowledge and experience of a specialist partner.
- Consistent training for everyone.
- Potentially cost-effective – a lot of training is free.

#### Level of sponsorship required

Human Resources team

Cost: £ – £ £ £

#### Organisations using this model



#### Training model in practice



**Aaron Price,**  
Digital Education Manager

### Hear from Aaron on how Nationwide is working with its learning partner, iDEA, to build the digital capability and confidence of its colleagues.

At Nationwide, we are passionate about developing the Essential Digital Skills and confidence of our colleagues. It's core to our values that colleagues across our customer-facing channels can talk confidently about digital products and help customers do things digitally, such as using our app or online banking.

But the challenge we face is that we have limited internal expertise when it comes to building the bespoke training needed. We also know colleagues, and especially those in branches, have very limited time for training. We need something they can dip in and out of and which covers a lot of broad subjects.

Collaborating with a learning partner is definitely right for us at the moment. And we're extremely grateful to FutureDotNow for introducing us to our partner. iDEA is an independent charity that offers a huge range of online modules on different digital subjects, which are very accessible, gamified and fun to complete.

For our pilot Essential Digital Skills programme, we split around 100 branch colleagues into two groups. Group A was told they needed to complete eight mandatory digital skills modules before they could explore all the other modules. And Group B was given a free rein from the beginning.

What we learnt from this test was those who were asked to do the mandatory modules were more likely to be engaged with the training and go on to do more modules. Overall, 2,500 iDEA modules were completed during the pilot, which averages at 25 per person.

Following the iDEA pilot, we did see a significant increase in colleagues' digital confidence and capability. We also heard from branch managers that customers were having better digital conversations with colleagues. And senior leaders at Nationwide started to become more aware of our work.

*“ We're extremely grateful to FutureDotNow for introducing us to our learning partner, who have been excellent.”*

Now, following the pilot, and after learning from other members of FutureDotNow, we've moved to the next stage of our training programme. This involves our colleagues answering a survey which asks them how confident they are about completing the 20 work tasks in the Essential Digital Skills Framework, as well as some more specific ones relevant to Nationwide.

Depending on the responses we get, we direct people to the most appropriate learning modules for them. This works really well for us, because it means our time-poor colleagues in branches can focus on the skills they need to and want to develop, rather than skills they may already be proficient at.

#### What's your advice to others?

- Invest time to form a strong collaborative relationship with your learning partner so they can support your organisation more effectively.
- Run a pilot programme to test if your training will help you meet the objectives you're aiming to achieve.
- Consider giving colleagues mandatory training modules to complete to get the ball rolling and encourage independent learning.
- When asking colleagues about their digital skills, focus on levels of confidence, not whether they can do or not do a task.

#### How has FutureDotNow supported you?

- Introduced Nationwide to its learning partner, iDEA, which helped to shape the design of our training programme.
- Reports from FutureDotNow have helped Nationwide understand the digital skills challenge we're facing and engage senior leaders with the issue.
- FutureDotNow membership and networking events have helped Nationwide learn from other organisations and increase our profile in this space.
- Nationwide's survey for colleagues which asks them about their digital confidence and capability is heavily influenced by the 20 work tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

### Trailblazer



#### Who it's for

Organisations looking to have a big and visible impact for colleagues and customers.

#### What it involves

- Creating bespoke branded resources that help to upskill employees and customers.
- Marketing your offer to customers and other organisations.
- Typically, training is not the trailblazer's core business, but they have recognised the importance of digital skills and are taking a leadership role in building confidence and capability across the UK.

#### Delivery method

- Bespoke online platforms and content.
- Advertising campaigns to promote your offer.

#### Potential benefits

- Strong engagement from workforce because of the bespoke, high-quality offer.
- Increased brand reputation, as organisation perceived as a leader in developing Essential Digital Skills.
- More customers moved to digital channels, leading to greater engagement and savings in time and money.

#### Level of sponsorship required

C-suite

#### Cost



#### Organisations using this model



#### Training model in practice



**Anna Collins,**  
Senior Digital Eagles Leader

Hear from Anna on how Barclays' work to equip colleagues, customers and the public with Essential Digital Skills is establishing it as a leader in this space.

Barclays has understood for some time the need to become a digital first bank. Alongside that is a desire to ensure colleagues and customers aren't left behind.

Back in 2013, we learnt that although colleagues had the latest technology to support customers, they didn't necessarily feel they had the skills or confidence needed to make the most of it.

That was the impetus for Barclays Digital Eagles. This programme of work was all about finding out what our colleagues' concerns were and what would help them build up their digital capability and confidence.

Since then, our programme has expanded and evolved into what it is today, with an extensive suite of colleague programmes and customer support. We have a bespoke platform called Digital Immersion that helps colleagues equip themselves with Essential Digital Skills as well as pursuing further skills such as coding and programming.

This wasn't the end of our digital skills journey. As an industry leader, we also started to think about the bigger picture. About how we could use what we'd learnt internally to help our customers and other members of society become confident with Essential Digital Skills too.

This led to the creation of our free external online platform, Digital Wings, in 2017. Here, you can find bitesize learning modules to boost digital skills and confidence. We also offer a tailored version of Digital Wings for organisations to help them provide digital skills to their workforce.

In 2020, Digital Wings had an upgrade to align our learning to the Essential Digital Skills Framework. FutureDotNow played a huge part in this, and work hard to ensure the framework is shared far and wide to help people move forward in the digital world.

*“ FutureDotNow's support has been invaluable. It's been a really great collaboration.”*

Having a national framework which spans every organisation is important, as it means that we can remove the various interpretations of what basic digital skills are and enable collaboration.

Our journey to date has placed Barclays firmly as a leader in the digital skills space. It's also led to our customers benefiting from more efficient journeys because our colleagues are far more equipped to deal with digital queries.

#### Key learnings

- Focus on developing skills and confidence, rather than giving people technology, because they won't necessarily use it.
- Select digital champions who have gone on a journey, rather than people who were already digitally confident.
- Recognise everyone will have different levels of digital capability and confidence, and that people in senior positions will not necessarily have the most advanced skills.

#### FutureDotNow support

- Educated Barclays about the Essential Digital Skills Framework, leading to improvements to our external Digital Wings platform.
- Introduced Barclays to organisations that have gone on to benefit from tailored versions of our Digital Wings platform.
- Helped Barclays think differently about working with and supporting other organisations, leading to more productive partnerships.
- Provided Barclays with speaking opportunities that have helped us showcase our learnings and increase brand reputation.

## Appendix C

# FutureDotNow resources

Over the past four years, we have worked with our members to develop resources that can help businesses and other organisations close digital skills gaps in their workforces and across the UK.

These resources are listed in this section. Some are freely available on our website, while others are restricted to our members.

To find out how you can join the FutureDotNow coalition, please visit [futuredotnow.uk/join-us](https://futuredotnow.uk/join-us)

Or if you'd like to discuss membership or have any other queries, please contact us at [hello@futuredotnow.uk](mailto:hello@futuredotnow.uk)

## Reports



### The Hidden Middle

Published in May 2021, FutureDotNow's The Hidden Middle report documented for the first time the size of the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK workforce.

[futuredotnow.uk/the-hidden-middle](https://futuredotnow.uk/the-hidden-middle)



### Unpacking the Hidden Middle

Published in March 2022, the report provides greater detail about the Essential Digital Skills most lacking in the UK workforce.

[futuredotnow.uk/unpacking-the-hidden-middle-2](https://futuredotnow.uk/unpacking-the-hidden-middle-2)



### UK Essential Digital Skills for Work

Developed by Lloyds Bank and FutureDotNow, and published in March 2023, the report provides the most detailed view yet of the Essential Digital Skills of the UK's workforce.

[futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report](https://futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report)

## Networking

### Accelerate

Held every spring, our main face-to-face event typically features networking opportunities, the launch of new research findings and practical activities.

### Learn & Solve events

Held throughout the year, our online Learn & Solve events involve a FutureDotNow member sharing their expert insights and answering questions.

### Collective Action

MEMBERS ONLY

Held every autumn, our main online event for members celebrates progress and encourages further action.

### The Community Space

MEMBERS ONLY

You can use our online collaboration and engagement platform to share ideas, ask questions and collaborate with other members.

## Guidance and tools



### Essential Digital Skills Framework

Created by industry and government, the framework features three levels: Foundation Level, Essential Digital Skills for Life, and Essential Digital Skills for Work.

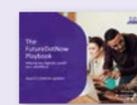
[futuredotnow.uk/about-us/the-essential-digital-skills-framework](https://futuredotnow.uk/about-us/the-essential-digital-skills-framework)



### Training models to help build basic digital confidence and capability

Please see page 38-48 of this document.

Five training models currently used by businesses to help equip their workforces with basic digital skills essential for work.



### The FutureDotNow Playbook

MEMBERS ONLY

Developed with FutureDotNow members, the Playbook is a complete guide to setting up and running your own digital skills programme.



### Top 10 essential digital tasks the UK workforce struggles with

Featured on page 12 of the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report, we suggest your training focuses on these skills if all 20 work tasks in the Essential Digital Skills Framework are too much.

[futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report](https://futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report)



### FutureDotNow Digital Skills Directory

A directory of FutureDotNow members who offer free or paid-for training and can work with you to design your digital skills programme.

[futuredotnow.uk/how-we-help/digital-skills-directory/](https://futuredotnow.uk/how-we-help/digital-skills-directory/)



### FutureDotNow Regional Guide

MEMBERS ONLY

Offers practical advice to help regional and local authorities develop their employees' Essential Digital Skills and upskill the communities they serve.



### FutureDotNow's four workplace personas

Each of the four workplace personas feature personal characteristics, common digital skill gaps, areas of strength and suggested ways to engage with this group.

[futuredotnow.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Hidden-Middle-Personas.pdf](https://futuredotnow.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Hidden-Middle-Personas.pdf)



### FutureDotNow Impact Measurement Guide

MEMBERS ONLY

Helps businesses analyse the impact of their digital upskilling activities for employees and customers. Findings can improve training and resources, and secure investment.



### FutureDotNow's assessment tool

MEMBERS ONLY

Currently in development with Accenture, the tool will allow any company to capture the Essential Digital Skills levels of their workforce through an anonymous survey.

# The Essential Digital Skills reporting landscape

## The Essential Digital Skills Framework

Created by industry and the Department for Education in 2018, the Essential Digital Skills Framework features three levels: Foundation Level, Essential Digital Skills for Life, and Essential Digital Skills for Work.

The Foundation Level features eight fundamental tasks to set an individual up for success online, for example, opening up an internet browser to find and use websites.

The Essential Digital Skills for Life level features 26 tasks and the Essential Digital Skills for Work level features 20 tasks. These tasks are spread across five skill areas: Problem Solving, Communicating, Handling Information and Content, Transacting, and Being Safe and Legal Online.

In 2022, and in partnership with Department for Education, Lloyds Banking Group led and collaborated with an advisory panel of 40 cross-sector partners, including FutureDotNow, to evolve the Essential Digital Skills Framework. This was designed to ensure it remained fit for purpose for today's digital society. The updated framework was used in the 2022 Consumer Digital Index.

Using data gathered as part of the 2022 CDI, Lloyds Banking Group, in partnership with FutureDotNow, published the first UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report in March 2023.

## The Consumer Digital Index

The Consumer Digital Index (CDI) uses behavioural and transactional data to build the most comprehensive view of digital and financial capability across the UK.

The CDI was first published in 2016 by Lloyds Bank.

To measure digital capability in individuals, the CDI uses the tasks outlined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

**The latest version of the Consumer Digital Index is available at [lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index](https://lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index)**

## The Essential Digital Skills for Work report

The UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report provides an overview of the specific digital work abilities that working age adults lack to a level of specificity not seen before. It includes analysis of the impact the skills gap has on individuals, their employers and the nation.

The data in the report focuses on the UK workforce as a whole and many distinct areas. These are:

- Industry sector
- Education
- Personal income
- Age
- Impairment
- Social grade
- Working status
- Nations and regions
- Size of organisation
- Gender
- Ethnicity.

The report also features real-life stories across different industries that demonstrate the many benefits of building digital capability and confidence.

**The UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report is available at [futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report](https://futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report)**



## Key data from the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report

### UK headline data



**(23.4m)** of the UK workforce cannot do all 20 digital tasks deemed essential for work.



**(c.3.2m)** cannot do any of the essential digital tasks for work. This group is more likely to be out of work, of a lower social grade, or living with an impairment.



The skills areas most people struggle with are Being Safe and Legal Online and Problem Solving. In both areas, only 60% of working age adults can complete all work tasks.

### Top ten essential digital tasks for work that most people struggle with

|   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I cannot improve my own and/or the organisation's productivity using digital tools (e.g. Trello, Microsoft Projects and Planner, Slack)  | <b>35%</b><br>(c. 13.8m) |
| 2. I cannot access salary and tax information digitally (e.g. password protected payslips, P60, P45)  | <b>27%</b><br>(c. 10.7m) |
| 3. I cannot set privacy and marketing settings for websites and my accounts (e.g. managing social media privacy settings, managing cookie settings, updating contact preferences) | <b>27%</b><br>(c. 10.7m) |
| 4. I cannot set up and manage an account on a professional online network/community/job site (e.g. LinkedIn, Total Jobs, Indeed)  | <b>26%</b><br>(c. 10.2m) |
| 5. I cannot complete digital records on behalf of, or within my organisation (e.g. absence management, holidays, timesheets, expenses, tax returns)                               | <b>24%</b><br>(c. 9.5m)  |
| 6. I cannot update my device software/operating systems when necessary to prevent viruses and other risks (e.g. enabling automatic updates, or installing when prompted to do so) | <b>23%</b><br>(c. 9.3m)  |
| 7. I cannot identify secure Wi-Fi networks to connect to (e.g. Wi-Fi networks where a unique password is required, trusted source or padlock next to Wi-Fi network)               | <b>22%</b><br>(c. 8.6m)  |
| 8. I cannot use workplace digital tools to create, share and collaborate with colleagues (e.g. Microsoft Teams, OneDrive, G-Suite, Office 365, WeTransfer, DropBox, WebEx, Slack) | <b>22%</b><br>(c. 8.4m)  |
| 9. I cannot securely access, synchronise and share information at work across different devices (e.g. manage email, calendar or appointment system via different devices)         | <b>21%</b><br>(c. 8.2m)  |
| 10. I cannot identify secure websites (e.g. by looking for the padlock and 'https' in the address bar)  | <b>21%</b><br>(c. 8.1m)  |

### Industry sector

See page 17 of the UK EDS for Work report for more detail.

- Industry is the greatest determiner of digital capability. The gap between the highest performing sector (media and advertising) and the lowest (construction) is the largest of any demographic factor.
- The construction sector has the most opportunity for upskilling – only 25% of people can complete all 20 essential digital tasks, followed by the service industry at 31% and manufacturing and automotive at 36%.
- The best performing sectors are media and advertising (68%) and technology (67%). This means that even in the tech sector, more than 30% of employees cannot complete all 20 essential digital tasks for work.

### Nations and regions

See page 19 of the UK EDS for Work report for more detail.

- In no UK region or nation can 50% of working age adults complete all 20 essential digital work tasks.
- The biggest region for opportunity is the West Midlands, where 15% of the workforce can't complete any of the essential digital work tasks, followed by Northern Ireland (12%), Wales (11%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (10%).

### Age

See page 44 of the UK EDS for Work report for more detail.

- Broadly speaking, age is a good indicator of the likelihood of a person being digitally confident and capable. Older age groups are more likely to be missing skills than younger groups. However, progression is not linear – the youngest age group is not the most digitally capable.
- Compared to 18-24 year-olds, more people aged 25-34 can do all 20 essential digital tasks for work (48% v 45%).
- Compared to 18-24 year-olds, fewer people aged 35-44 cannot do any of the 20 tasks (5% v 6%).
- These margins might be small, but they are a clear indication that young people are not coming out of higher and further education with the full suite of Essential Digital Skills.

### Employment status

See page 21 of the UK EDS for Work report for more detail.

- 20% of people not in paid work (but not retired) cannot do any of the 20 digital tasks essential for work. This suggests not having digital skills is a significant barrier to joining the workforce.

To find out more about the current scale of the workplace digital skills gap, see the UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report – [www.futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report](http://www.futuredotnow.uk/essential-digital-skills-for-work-report)

## A timeline of national action on Essential Digital Skills

A short history of the work of government and other stakeholders to tackle digital capability and confidence for UK adults.

### 2015

**Go ON UK, the UK's digital skills alliance, launches the UK's first framework for basic digital skills.**

This standardises the five key skills people need to use digital and the principles for doing so safely.

**On behalf of the Skills Funding Agency, Liz Williams, now CEO of FutureDotNow, chairs a review of publicly funded digital skills qualifications.**

This is the first step towards a law stating that all UK adults must have free access to basic digital skills training.

### 2016

**Lloyds Banking Group publishes the first UK Consumer Digital Index, which provides a view of digital and financial capability across the UK.**

The report reveals 11.1 million people have low digital capability.<sup>22</sup>

### 2017

**The UK Consumer Digital Index reveals that 11.5 million people are missing at least one of the five basic digital skills and 4.8 million have none.<sup>23</sup>**

**Go ON UK is dissolved and guardianship of the basic digital skills definition is transferred to the Tech Partnership.**

### 2018

**The UK Consumer Digital Index reveals that 11.3 million people are missing at least one of the five basic digital skills and 4.3 million have none.<sup>24</sup>**

**The Tech Partnership and Lloyds Banking Group relaunch the basic digital skills definition as the Essential Digital Skills Framework.**

This follows a consultation with over 400 cross-sector partners, which is carried out in partnership with the Department for Education.

**The Department for Education begins a public consultation on improving adult basic digital skills.**

The department seeks views on draft national standards for digital skills, improving accredited qualifications, and a proposed national entitlement to basic digital skills.

### 2019

**For the first time, the UK Consumer Digital Index features a specific measure of essential digital capability in the UK workforce.**

This is based on the 17 work tasks that feature in the new Essential Digital Skills Framework.

The UK CDI reports that 53% of UK employees (17.3m) do not have the Essential Digital Skills needed for work.<sup>21</sup>

### 2019 continued

**Department for Education confirms a national digital skills entitlement will give all adults access to free accredited courses to improve their Essential Digital Skills.**

The courses are based on newly launched national standards for Essential Digital Skills, and the standards are based on the Essential Digital Skills Framework.

**The Department for Education assumes stewardship of the Essential Digital Skills Framework in England.**

**The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Digital Skills is established.**

**The FutureDotNow coalition is established by the then Lord Mayor of London, Sir Peter Estlin.**

The coalition's members are businesses that recognise not enough progress is being made to equip working age adults with Essential Digital Skills.

### 2020

**The UK Consumer Digital Index reports that 52% of UK employees (17.2m) do not have the Essential Digital Skills needed for work.<sup>11</sup>**

**FutureDotNow commissions management consulting firm Oliver Wyman to research what is stopping people from building digital skills and how employers can motivate them to upskill.**

**The national digital skills entitlement becomes law, giving adults with low digital skills access to free courses.**

**The Department for Education launches the Skills Toolkit.**

It includes free access to digital courses, helping people improve their skills and employment prospects during the height of lockdown.

### 2021

**The UK Consumer Digital Index reports that 36% of UK employees (11.8m) do not have the Essential Digital Skills needed for work.<sup>25</sup>**

**FutureDotNow launches The Hidden Middle with Accenture and BT.**

For the first time, the report brings to light the true scale of the Essential Digital Skills gap in the UK workforce and its impact on business, individuals and the UK economy.

### 2021 continued

**FutureDotNow launches The FutureDotNow Playbook.**

This comprehensive guide helps businesses to move rapidly from identifying skills gaps in their workforces to finding solutions that improve digital confidence and capability.

### 2022

**Lloyds Banking Group updates the Essential Digital Skills Framework designed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.**

This involves collaboration with 40 cross-sector partners, including FutureDotNow.

**Department for Education relinquishes stewardship of the Essential Digital Skills Framework.**

Stewardship nominally sits with an informal group of cross-sector stakeholders.

**The UK Consumer Digital Index reports that 22% of UK employees (8.6m) do not have the Essential Digital Skills needed for work.<sup>10</sup>**

**FutureDotNow launches Unpacking the Hidden Middle in partnership with Lloyds Banking Group and PwC.**

The report provides new analysis on the digital skills of almost the entire working population.

### 2022 continued

**The UK government launches a new national Digital Strategy.<sup>26</sup>**

It includes acknowledgment of 'the hidden middle' as a specific audience requiring direct support.

**The Department for Culture, Media and Sport launches a new Digital Skills Council.**

It provides a focal point for collaboration between government and industry to address the digital skills gap in the UK.

### 2023

**The UK Essential Digital Skills for Work report is launched by Lloyds Banking Group and FutureDotNow.**

It provides an overview of the specific digital work abilities that working age adults lack to a level of specificity not seen before.

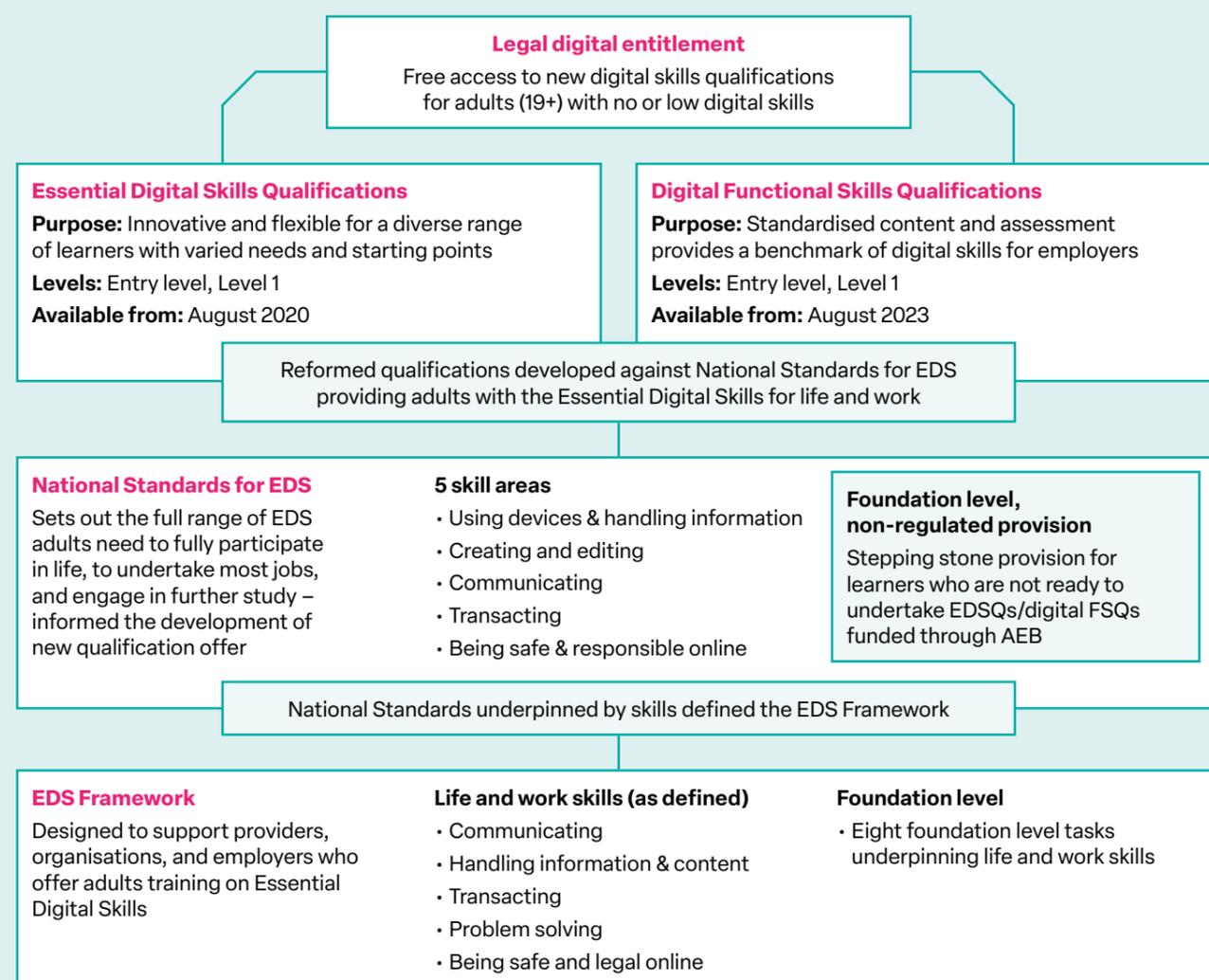
The report reveals that 59% (23.4 million) of the UK's workforce cannot do all 20 digital tasks deemed essential for work. 3.2m million (8%) cannot do any of the tasks.<sup>1</sup>

## The statutory digital entitlement

The below diagram from the Department for Education illustrates how the Essential Digital Skills Framework forms the basis for the national standards for Essential Digital Skills.

The national standards are used to create two types of formal qualifications: the Essential Digital Skills qualifications (EDSQs) and the digital Functional Skills qualifications (FSQs).

These qualifications are available under the government’s legal digital entitlement (also known as statutory digital entitlement), mirroring legal entitlements for English and maths.



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