



**HM Treasury, Comprehensive Spending
Review 2020**

FutureDotNow's response, September 2020

FutureDotNow

FutureDotNow wants everyone to thrive in a digital UK. It is a coalition of leading companies and civil society organisations whose mission is to help achieve a 100% digitally included UK. We have over 100 members with a reach of millions of people through their employees, customers, supply chains and communities. This provides a multiplier effect on tackling our digital skills through common goals, complementary skills and co-ordinated action. We have addressed the priorities below in this response.

Strengthening the UK's economic recovery from COVID-19 by prioritising jobs and skills

Levelling up economic opportunity across all nations and regions of the country by investing in infrastructure, innovation and people – thus closing the gap with our competitors by spreading opportunity, maximising productivity and improving the value add of each hour worked

Strengthening the UK's place in the world

Digital skills

Our digital issues in the UK are not simply based on lack of infrastructure, which has come in leaps and bounds in the last decade; we are a world-leading nation in that respect. The issue now is about the millions who cannot use that infrastructure at all or to its full advantage; 17.1 million (52%) people in the UK's workforce lack workplace digital skills and 11.7 million (22%) people are without the skills needed for everyday life. However, only 23% of the UK workforce has had digital skills training from employers.¹

Yet digital is at the heart of just about everything we do, it is now the foundation for so many other skills: from learning them to using them. From the high-tech, digital industries who need people with a great digital skills education they can develop, to warehousing businesses whose forklift truck drivers need to access SAP enterprise software systems, the UK has to keep up with the rest of the world.

The digital exclusion of so many people is damaging the UK's competitiveness and productivity, preventing individuals and businesses from taking full advantage of the benefits of digital technology in whatever sector they work. Many businesses cannot recruit people who can work with their systems, more and more of which are going online.

It is vital that we prioritise a 100% digitally included UK, starting with a Covid-19 recovery for everyone.

Addressing the digital skills issue, levelling up

A 100% digitally included UK, with everyone equipped with and confident of their digital skills, would build a resilient economy and a levelled-up nation. We could grow the economy by almost £15 for every £1 invested in digital skills and inclusion, according to Cebr².

But today millions of people can't get online, don't have the skills to make the most of being online and have no motive to get online. And it's easy to assume that digital exclusion is an issue that only affects older people but it's not as simple as that: over 40% of those offline are of working age.

¹ Lloyds Bank – UK Consumer Digital Index 2020

² [Cebr \(2018\) The Economic Impact of Digital Inclusion in the UK](#)

FutureDotNow is working to inspire behavioural change across society to achieve a cultural shift in attitudes to digital technology. We're working with businesses and other organisations to help ensure everyone has the will to get online and the digital skills to thrive in life and work. We want more to join us to help achieve these goals and would ask that the Government encourages organisations to do this.

FutureDotNow is:

- inspiring organisations to equip employees and customers with the Essential Digital Skills as a starting point and encouraging them to magnify impact through their supply chain and networks
- empowering coalition members with knowledge and tools, making it easy to access existing resources, identifying and closing gaps using the power of the coalition
- building understanding of the digital-skill motivation gap and how to close it
- demonstrating and tackling the issue at scale; as a coalition we greatly multiply the sum of our parts, together we are already making a huge impact.

However, the issue isn't just a lack of digital skills training, it's also been a lack of motive and relevance to individuals to go online. From FutureDotNow's research we know that ways to address this include:

- start with the problems that digital can solve, don't push the digital solution
- frame digital learning as being the way to solve 'real-life' challenges, avoid using the word 'digital' at all
- recognise the things that de-motivate and address them (security, scams, data loss, etc).

The future

Motives for engaging digitally exploded with the pandemic: from getting to grips with conference calls to virtual parties. It's clear that online activities will remain as larger gatherings and unrestricted travel remain impossible. Digital skills are crucial for people to participate in the UK's reopening, whether ordering a pint through an app, accessing services that are increasingly online or keeping up with people whom you can't visit. Our ability to stay alert and control the virus will be shaped by technology, as many bars and restaurants ask customers to check in digitally, and as track and trace apps scale up. But nine million people, or 16%, are unable to use a digital device by themselves. And around 6.5 million or 12% cannot open apps³.

FutureDotNow is calling on business to find new ways to motivate and upskill their workforces, customers. And we're calling on the Government to support that effort with a coordinated and sustained public-private partnership to deliver a 100% digitally included UK and a recovery where everyone can participate.

For further information please contact David Pincott, Head of Communications, FutureDotNow
david.pincott@futuredotnow.uk

³ Lloyds Bank – UK Consumer Digital Index 2020