

1 From Lord Carter - Minister for Communications, Technology and Broadcasting

2 Dear Champion and Task Force Members,

2.1 Delivering Digital Inclusion

Thank you for agreeing to devote your time and energy to the challenge of reducing digital exclusion. In this open letter I will briefly set out our mission.

Digital inclusion is defined as: **The best use of digital technology, either directly or indirectly to improve the lives and life chances of all citizens, particularly the most disadvantaged, and the places in which they live.**

Much has been done over the last few years to address this agenda, as Paul Murphy, Minister for Digital Inclusion set out in his October 2008 document *Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation*. I have also set out an ambitious set of goals in *The Digital Britain Project - Final Report*. These documents represent a serious commitment to do even more for the 17 million people who are still excluded from digital technology. In particular, further action is needed for those communities and groups who are both digitally and socially excluded – an estimated 6 million people across the UK.

Your task, now, is to be our conscience, on behalf of those citizens who are disadvantaged due to digital exclusion. I want you to highlight existing and emerging inequalities, particularly in the light of the rapidly changing nature of digital technologies; I want you to challenge the public sector, the private sector and industry, and the third sector to work together to help disadvantaged people benefit from new technologies of every type. I want you to make this issue one which is clearly recognized by the public as being (for example) as essential to tackle as good public health. I want you to ensure we are reaching out to individuals who are currently unaware of the opportunities available to help them enhance their lives and improve their life chances through technology, and where the greatest benefit can be delivered.

Most importantly, I want you to take vigorous steps to bring together the right people to maximize cross-sector efforts and action to deliver this agenda. This is not simply about reports and recommendations; it is about drawing on your considerable skills in your own areas of specialism, and on your contacts within your own sector to compel, inspire and direct activity. To help you do so I have set out in annexes to this letter some of the key groups affected by digital exclusion, and a set of key priorities for digital inclusion which I believe are priorities for you to focus on as you start your work.

This action will be led by the Champion for Digital Inclusion, who will represent the digitally and socially excluded people where we are not realizing the greatest benefits that can

come from digital technologies. The Task Force's responsibility will be to provide expertise, ideas, and energy to support the Champion through regular meetings, and in brokering the right contacts at the highest levels within government, industry and the third sector in order to make a real impact on real lives. I also expect you to actively engage with excluded people in order to understand and reflect the needs of digitally excluded people and communities.

The detailed work will be carried out by a small team of full time staff who will support you all in taking forward the key actions as they develop, and ensuring the programme proceeds with vigor, speed, and authority. I will expect you to produce regular reports which highlight the progress you are making and emphasize what needs to be done on the remaining challenges, including an annual public report to Government. You will be a critical friend to government, providing both challenge and support, particularly as we consider priorities and actions to address the economic downturn which are now of major importance for us all. I will ensure that Ministers across government fully assist in providing such support and information as is appropriate in discharging your task, particularly where your key challenges align with their departmental priorities.

This is not an easy task, but it is an essential one and in the two years you will be established, your success will be measured by the contribution your work brings to improved social outcomes for those who are digitally and socially excluded, and in setting the pace for change, and we will agree jointly these success measures shortly. There is much going on already, but there is a real need for a review of that work, a more coherent focus, and a much greater public awareness of digital inclusion issues.

I wish you well, and I very much look forward to working with you.

Lord Carter
Minister for Communications, Technology and Broadcasting

Annexes Attached:

1. Key challenges
2. Who do we want to help?

Annex 1: The Key Challenges

Direct benefits:

Citizen and community empowerment:

Making everyone vividly aware of the importance of this agenda and its direct relevance to improving the quality of lives and life chances for all citizens, including by:

1. Making significant progress in reducing the number of people who lack the skills, resources, or motivation to engage with digital technology - particularly those disadvantaged groups who have most to gain, such as older and socially excluded people, jobseekers, and deprived communities; and to champion the Government's new Universal Broadband Service commitment.
2. Promoting quicker progress in ensuring usable and accessible technology is available for those with special needs, and deployed to support them in the community, as well as being affordable, inter-operable and energy efficient.
3. Ensuring every child and young person gains ICT and digital participation skills by embedding the use of technology into the school and community education curricula.
4. Building more cohesive, resilient communities and more responsive public services by using all kinds of ICT and digital media to capture the interests and resources of the people living within them.

Indirect benefits

Effective services:

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

5. Promoting innovation and widespread adoption of efficient and effective best practice in the use of ICT to improve the strategic planning, integration, and delivery of services for excluded communities and groups by local authorities, central government and the third sector.
6. Promoting the improvements technology can bring to people's health, well-being and ability to live independently in their own homes and in the community, increasing access to services designed for this purpose, and avoiding multiple incompatibility issues in connectivity and use.

Sustainable benefits

Intelligence and Focus:

To monitor and evidence the risks and opportunities of emerging digital technology for excluded groups and communities and minimise the environmental impact from these technologies, including by:

7. Looking ahead to analyse emerging opportunities and risks for digitally excluded groups and communities arising from the increasingly digitally driven society, and recommending actions.
8. Promoting greater cross sector working involving the private, public, and third sectors, to maximise opportunities for delivery agents and benefits for citizens through incentives for better planning and efficiencies, with particular attention to reducing environmental impacts.
9. Identifying targets and initiating the ongoing public reporting of digital inclusion progress in the UK, drawing on existing data sources and European (Riga) targets to enable consistent measurement and international comparisons.

2.1.1.1.1 Annex 2:

2.1.1.1.2 Who do we want to help?

Whilst all citizens matter, Government wants digital inclusion action to target and benefit the 17 million people from the UK currently excluded from the benefits of technology. Included in their number we know:

- 50% of people without access to the internet are 65+
- 49% are in social class DE
- 75% are not working (including retired and looking for work)
- 28% are in social housing (3 in 4 people in social housing)
- 66% stopped at secondary school level (e.g. only 2% have a higher degree)

In order for digital inclusion to have the greatest impact, Government will therefore have a particular focus on the estimated 13 per cent of the general population – about six million people –who are *both* socially and digitally excluded.

Hence the definition Government wishes to use to define and direct digital inclusion going forward is:

The best use of digital technology, either directly or indirectly to improve the lives and life chances of all citizens, particularly the most disadvantaged, and the places in which they live.

That 13 per cent which Government believes has most to gain from technology are most helpfully thought of in the following three groupings:

- *Older people:* A substantial proportion of older people could be assisted by technology as a means of addressing their poverty, social isolation, health and need for support to live independently in the community. Older people remain one of the population groups who can most benefit from the take-up of new technologies, but many do not. There are many ready means of targeting this group - for instance through care homes and third sector charities like Age Concern and Help the Aged, existing intermediaries like UK online centres, through the Digital Switchover Help Scheme or even the state pension.
- *The 10 per cent most economically deprived:* This group, as measured using the Index of Multiple Deprivation, are highly correlated with social housing tenancies. A focus on housing type (e.g. registered social landlords, hostels, care homes) in future policy development, and on the benefits system, will provide a means of reaching the poorest people in society.

- *Socially excluded and minority groups*: There are many smaller groups for whom the sources of exclusion are multiple and chronic – including factors like disability or learning difficulties, ethnic origin, location, culture or language. There are often existing lines of responsibility within Government for these groups, and existing networks of collaboration within the third sector which can be harnessed to deliver meaningful technological support.

Other groups in this category include offenders, those with mental health issues, those out of work, early school leavers, looked after children and those with literacy and numeracy skills needs, homeless people or frequent movers, those living in isolated or rural communities, and families at risk from poverty, crime, addiction or poor health.