



Good Things
Foundation

A Manifesto to Fix the Digital Divide



June 2024

A digital crisis is sweeping the UK

Banks are shutting their doors, healthcare is moving online, and the cost-of-living crisis continues. We live in the age of AI, yet one in five people feel left behind by technology.

We believe that everyone should have the access, skills and support to navigate the online world - and we're not alone:



77%

believe being able to access the internet is an essential need



92%

believe that most essential services these days require internet access



76%

believe the UK Government should invest in digital skills support so everyone has the skills they need to get online.

We're Good Things Foundation

Good Things Foundation is the UK's leading digital inclusion charity. We have over 12 years experience tackling the digital divide head-on, alongside our National Digital Inclusion Network - over 5,000 community partners helping excluded people benefit from digital UK-wide.

We work in partnership with Virgin Media O2, Vodafone, Nominet, and Accenture. We deliver free services such as the National Databank, National Device Bank, and Learn My Way.

Our Manifesto to Fix the Digital Divide lays out the opportunities for the future Government to show sustained, joined-up leadership on digital inclusion; commit to publishing a clear plan of action serving communities across the country; and build on the [cross-party House of Lords committee's recommendations on digital exclusion](#).

An action plan to **Fix the Digital Divide – for Good**

The future Government's plan should commit to five clear actions:

1 Collaborating with businesses, civil society, and the public sector to fix the digital divide.

To break down barriers to opportunity and set the UK on a fairer path to growth, we're asking the future Government to co-invest alongside businesses. Five million people could be supported with £24.4m a year – seeing an end to digital exclusion by 2030.

The economic case for investment in digital inclusion and skills is strong, showing a significant £13.7 billion economic benefit to the UK.

Together with Good Things Foundation, the National Digital Inclusion Network, civil society, business and the public sector, the future Government should co-invest in digital inclusion and galvanise cross-sector collaboration to fix the digital divide.

2 Ensuring all adults can get vital help with digital skills, confidence, and safety in an age of AI.

In the age of AI, digital skills and confidence are critical – yet 8.5 million adults lack the most basic skills, and 45% of households with children are below the Minimum Digital Living Standard defined by members of the public – with children and parents falling down on practical and critical skills. Reviewing learning frameworks and funding is a good place for the future Government to start.

The Essential Digital Skills entitlement supports adults with a free formal basic qualification in digital skills; yet, in the last year less than 18,000 people have benefited – showing the limitations of formal routes compared to informal, community-based learning.

Minaj's story

15 years ago, my life was on a downward spiral. I had gotten out of an abusive relationship and my mental health was declining. For 10 years I sat at home with no one to talk to. I had nothing, I was completely isolated, not knowing how to connect.

After one of my CBT sessions I noticed a poster for digital classes. Learning how to use a computer using Learn My Way helped me to do so many things; I learnt how to order my prescription on the NHS app, use comparison sites, do online shopping and more. I improved my skills so much that I was able to become a digital mentor at the hub and now I've been working here for 6 years.

I can safely say that digital skills have changed my life. It has opened my eyes - my health is so much better and I've just signed off benefits completely and it's the best thing I did. I've been on benefits since 2010, it has taken me 13 years to get off it, but now I have.



3

Leading by example in reusing appropriate tech for social good through the National Device Bank.

The UK is the world's second largest emitter of electronic waste per capita, yet 1.5 million people in the UK don't have a smartphone, tablet or laptop. The thousands of community partners we work with urgently need suitable devices, but demand is five times greater than current supply.

We're asking the future Government to commit that all appropriate tech is reused for good by donating to Good Things' [National Device Bank](#) - breathing life into end-of-use devices to provide them to people experiencing digital exclusion. By joining our movement alongside businesses, Councils and public bodies, the future Government can tackle exclusion and combat the climate crisis.

4

Recognising internet access is essential - innovating so everyone can afford to get online, and it is free for those most excluded.

Connectivity is essential. We need the future Government to help eradicate data poverty - ensuring everyone can afford to get online. Good Things' [National Databank](#) delivers free mobile connectivity SIMs donated by Virgin Media O2 and Vodafone to ensure those most excluded can get online.

Broadband 'social tariffs' can support households on the lowest incomes to stay connected. But they aren't affordable for everyone. With savings passed on to the end consumer, cutting VAT to 0% would ensure many more families are able to stay online - and up to £153 million a year saved by people on very low incomes.

5

Signposting from Government and NHS front line services so people can find local support from the National Digital Inclusion Network.

The [National Digital Inclusion Network](#) is made up of over 5,000 hyperlocal organisations – such as libraries, family hubs, community centres, food banks – providing free, friendly, informal digital inclusion support. This is vital as more NHS and Government public services move online.

These networked hyperlocal organisations offer a range of support, including National Databank, National Device Bank, and Learn My Way, and exist in all parts of the UK. Government service providers such as JobCentre Plus – alongside GPs, banking hubs, and others – can signpost people who might benefit to their nearest hub, or become digital inclusion hubs themselves.

We want to see commitment to fixing the digital divide. We urge the future Government to collaborate on actions that empower people and communities in this AI age.

Embracing our plan will lead to a future where everyone can benefit, **with nobody left behind.**

Sources: CEBR and Good Things Foundation, with Capita (2022) [Economic Impact of Digital Inclusion](#); Good Things Foundation (2024) [Digital Nation 2024](#); Gov.uk (2024) [Further education and skills – data](#); Minimum Digital Living Standard (2024) [Overall Findings Report](#); Lloyds Bank (2023), [Consumer Digital Index](#); Public First (2023) [Poll for Good Things Foundation](#); Public First (2024), [Poll for Good Things Foundation](#); Virgin Media O2 (2023), [Polling Data](#).



Good Things Foundation

Find out more about digital inclusion and keep up to date
about Good Things Foundation's policy work:

www.goodthingsfoundation.org