

[News story: Adults to benefit from digital skills overhaul](#)

Adult digital skills qualifications are to be overhauled under [plans](#) announced today (18 October) by Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton to help more people of all ages benefit from getting online.

The latest [survey](#) estimates that 11.3 million adults in the UK do not have the full range of basic digital skills required to operate effectively in day to day life – like sending an email or completing an online form – and 4.3 million have no digital skills at all. With an estimated 90% of all jobs in the next 20 years requiring some form of digital knowledge, it is vitally important that everyone, whatever their age or background, can gain the skills they need in an increasingly online world.

Getting digitally active is not just good for the economy, but has a wide range of positive personal benefits. [Research](#) shows that over 70% people aged over 55 say being online means they can do things more quickly, like paying bills, and that it helps reduce feelings of isolation.

To help boost adult digital skills the government has launched a consultation during Get Online Week setting out plans to:

- Overhaul the current national standards setting out the core digital skills people need to get on in life and work – supporting them to use digital devices like tablets, smart phones and laptop computers, and to perform everyday activities that most people take for granted like how to navigate the internet, send an email, complete online forms and make online payments.
- Introduce improved basic digital skills qualifications at two levels – beginner and essential.
- Introduce a nationwide entitlement for all adults without basic digital skills to enrol on the new qualifications free of charge from 2020

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

We have a big challenge to tackle. Technology is advancing quickly, but one in five of us in the UK don't have basic digital skills. That means it might be a struggle to send an email, search on the internet, or shop online.

Being able to get online is so important. It opens up a whole host of information, including being able to apply for jobs. It is also an important way to keep in touch with friends and family.

I want people of all ages to have the skills and confidence they need for work and everyday life, so I'm thrilled to launch this consultation today to hear what you think of our plans!

Minister for Digital Margot James said:

Everyone should be able to take advantage of digital technology, whether it is learning how to send emails or developing specialist skills to work in a tech role.

We have launched a Digital Inclusion Fund and a Digital Innovation Fund to help boost older people's technology skills and attract a more diverse range of people into digital industries.

These will also help us maintain our position as a world-leading digital economy.

The Good Things Foundation's Chief Executive Helen Milner said:

We're delighted that adults who lack essential digital skills will be able to benefit from free support to gain these skills. Putting digital literacy on the same footing as English and Maths is an important step, recognising the centrality of digital skills in the modern world.

In doing so, it is vital that we don't leave anyone behind, and that in particular we reach and support the most excluded in society who are more likely to lack digital skills. Having a single, agreed set of national standards will also ensure that providers of digital skills are working towards the same goal: helping as many adults as possible use digital to be happier, healthier and better off.

The consultation follows the publication of the [2017 UK Digital Strategy](#) which set out an ambition for everyone to have the core digital skills they need to fully participate in society, as well as the announcement in January of full funding for adults who need to take basic digital skills courses from 2020.

The measures will build on steps already taken to drive up the government's digital offer including making computing a statutory national curriculum subject, and introducing a new Computer Science GCSE and A Level.

The government also recently announced a [£1m Digital Skills Innovation Fund](#) to help people from underrepresented groups gain the skills they need to work in digital roles, and the new £400,000 Digital Inclusion Fund which was launched to help older and disabled people acquire digital skills.

Innovative projects are expected to include the teaching of basic skills such as booking GP appointments online, using apps to communicate with friends and family, and making the most of search engines.

Digital skills also form a core part of all our new high quality standards

for new apprenticeships and T Levels. The government is also working closely with top tech companies to develop dedicated digital apprenticeships and T Levels.