

# News story: Government backed scheme helps train two million people in digital skills

The Digital Skills Partnership sees Government, businesses, charities and voluntary organisations join forces to give people of all ages the opportunity to boost their online know-how by offering free training in areas such as basic online skills through to cybersecurity and coding.

At the launch of the government's Digital Strategy in March, four million training opportunities were pledged by businesses such as Barclays, Cisco, Google and Lloyds Banking Group. With over half of those training opportunities having now been completed, the Partnership is continuing work with business to bridge the gap between the estimated 11.5 million people who lack at least one basic digital skill.

Minister for Digital Matt Hancock said:

Just eight months ago we committed with the tech sector to delivering four million skills training opportunities. Today two million of those have already been delivered. This is a massive over-delivery in a vital area, and there's more to come.

Digital skills training is essential to ensure that the UK can take advantage of technology and the opportunities it presents.

If we want to maintain our position as a world leading digital economy we need to ensure more people are able to use basic online services, use the digital tools they need for work, or gain the advanced skills in coding, AI or data science that are required in specialist roles.

Through this Partnership with industry and other sectors, the Government can deliver on its commitment to strengthening digital skills right across the country so that no-one is left behind.

Nick Williams, Managing Director, Consumer Digital at Lloyds Banking Group said:

With 11.5m people in the UK lacking Basic Digital Skills, it is crucial that organisations work together to improve digital capability across the UK. At Lloyds Banking Group we have committed to help 2.5m people by 2020 and we are proud to have already trained more than half a million individuals and businesses face-to-face this year. This has been achieved by utilising our extensive branch network, but also through partnering with other

industry leaders like Google and the Good Things Foundation. We are delighted to be a key part of the Digital Skills Partnership and working with others towards a strong digital future for the UK.

Ashok Vaswani, CEO Barclays UK said:

Barclays is pleased to support the Government's Digital Pledge and be part of today's milestone in boosting the UK's digital skills. We are committed to ensuring the UK is armed with the digital skills and tools required for current and future generations and at Barclays we've improved the digital skills of over 1.1million individuals- through initiatives such as teaching coding to UK school children, expanding our network of 18,000 strong Digital Eagles, and providing free training to small businesses across the country. Earlier this year we launched a huge Digital Safety drive to keep consumers and businesses protected against the growing threat of digital fraud and scams. The industry, working with the Government must do everything in our power to keep the UK digitally safe. We have also expanded our Eagle Labs network- giving fast growing businesses access to space, technology and 3D printers.

Chief Executive of Good Things Foundation Helen Milner said:

We're proud to be a member of the Digital Skills Partnership, bringing our expertise in supporting the hardest to reach to gain digital skills to improve their lives. Through the Online Centres Network, and with other partners, we've supported 75,000 people to gain basic digital skills since March.

We're pleased the government is taking an ambitious approach to ensuring that not only can the UK become a leading digital nation, but that no-one is left behind as we do this, and we're pleased to be playing our part. The Digital Skills Partnership has created more than four million free digital skills training opportunities as part of our Digital Strategy to make Britain the best place in the world to start and grow a digital business and ensure our digital economy works for everyone.

Free training opportunities that have been successfully accessed include:

- Lloyds Banking Group training 550,000 individuals, SMEs and charities face to face on digital skills, including internet banking.
- Barclays improving the digital skills of over 1 million individuals. This includes teaching basic coding to 45,000 children.

- BT teaching 250,000 school children through its Barefoot Computing programme and remaining on track to meet its pledge to train 500,000 by the end of the 2017/18 school year, taking the total to 1.5 million.
- Google's training opportunities on offer include their Digital Garage which teaches local businesses and the wider community digital skills. It has already reached its target to visit 100 cities and towns in 2017 and will continue to visit other locations around the UK.

Cisco also recently announced 250,000 more people would be trained in a range of digital skills through their Networking Academy by 2020. This is alongside existing pledges on training opportunities from IBM UK, HP and Accenture.

Next month, the first Digital Skills Partnership Board with representatives from the public, private and charity sectors will meet to discuss a more joined up approach to delivering digital skills and best ways to tackle digital exclusion so everyone can make the most of the digital world.