

REQUEST FOR DIRECTOR DECISION – DD1455

Title: GLA becoming a signatory to HM Government's Digital Inclusion Charter

Executive Summary:

Almost one in ten Londoners is digitally excluded; they are not online and not benefiting from all things digital. The government has set up a Digital Inclusion Charter which commits signatories to jointly lead a cross-sector partnership focused on delivering a set of actions that means by 2016 it aims to have reduced the number of people who are offline by 25% (nationally) and will continue to do this every 2 years.

The GLA is undertaking many of the commitments in the HMG's Digital Inclusion Charter already and as such, approval is sought to formally sign up to the charter. This will add legitimacy and the weight of collective support to the GLA's digital inclusion efforts and would also afford the GLA an additional opportunity to further influence the government thinking and activity around digital inclusion.

Decision:

That the Executive Director approves the GLA becoming a signatory to HMG's Digital Inclusion Charter.

AUTHORISING DIRECTOR

I have reviewed the request and am satisfied it is correct and consistent with the Mayor's plans and priorities.
It has my approval.

Name: Jeff Jacobs

Position: Executive Director Communities and Intelligence

Signature:



Date: 10.2.2016

PART I - NON-CONFIDENTIAL FACTS AND ADVICE

Decision required – supporting report

1. Introduction and background

London remains one of the best places in the world in which to live, learn, earn and visit. It is a hive of digital activity, but not all Londoners are benefiting from this digital revolution. Almost one in ten Londoners is digitally excluded; they are not online and not benefiting from all things digital. All Londoners should have basic digital skills¹ to:

- manage information - find, manage and store digital information and content
- Communicate - communicate, interact, collaborate, share and connect with others
- Transact - purchase and sell goods and services, organise finances and use digital government services
- Create - create basic digital content in order to engage with digital communities and organisations
- Problem solve - increase independence and confidence by solving problems and finding solutions using digital tools.

The Smart London Plan highlights the proposed use of digital information and communication technologies to enhance the quality and performance of services in London, reducing costs and resource consumption, and engaging more effectively and actively with its citizens. In order for Smart London to be a reality, Londoners need to have access to and be able to use these technologies.

The GLA's ambition is for every Londoner and London business to get the digital connectivity they need at an affordable and internationally competitive price. Every corner of the capital should have the best access to the best possible digital connections to make this Smart London Plan a reality, and that is why the GLA is working with boroughs, providers and others to make sure London's long-term infrastructure needs are met.

In 2013, one in ten² of adult Londoners had never used the internet. The groups statistically most likely to not be online include older people, disabled people and people in social housing. This exclusion from the digital life of the capital has economic and social implications for individuals, the community and the wider economy³. In 2014, 90.2% of Londoners over 16 had used the internet– that number rose to 91.3% in the first quarter of 2015.⁴

1.1. Digital Inclusion in London

While the numbers of people in London that are digitally excluded are low, the benefits of being online are increasing exponentially;

- More and more goods and services are moving online
- Significant financial savings can be made online by comparing prices or by receiving information about deals and sales
- Time, money and effort are saved with things like online shopping/payments and e-banking; it's often quicker, easier and cheaper online
- Access to unparalleled quantities of information and data
- Social isolation and loneliness is reduced, particularly among older Londoners and those with disabilities, by being connected online to family, friends and the wider community.

Further, the Government drive towards "digital by default" is well under way. Many, if not all, government services will eventually be digitalised and available online only and although there is intended to be appropriate support for those not able to use digital services, this support is yet to

¹ which include managing information, communicating, transacting, creating and problem solving online

² Labour Force Survey 2013, Q1, ONS

³ GO ON UK and Booz and Co "This is for Everyone: The Case for Universal Digitisation", 2012

⁴ LFS data 2014 &15

be defined and therefore there is a real risk that some groups will be excluded or face significant barriers from participating in such transactions in the future. For example:

- **Welfare reform:** Universal Credit, and other welfare reforms that are being rolled out nationwide from 2017 will be applied for and managed primarily online and this will only increase, not decrease.
- **NHS Choices:** NHS Choices is England's biggest health website, providing a comprehensive health information service. The website provides the public with information to make choices about health, lifestyle and NHS services; GP and ancillary services are being digitalised also.
- **2021 Census:** In March 2014, the National Statistician and Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority made a joint recommendation on the 2021 census and the future provision of population statistics in England and Wales. It recommended: *"An online census of all households and communal establishments in England and Wales in 2021 as a modern successor to the traditional, paper-based decennial census, but recognising that special care would need to be taken to support those who are unable to complete the census online"*.

1.2. Why people are digitally excluded?

There is no single reason for people being digitally excluded. Often it is a combination of people unable to afford the cost of equipment and connectivity, a lack of skills/confidence or not understanding the benefits of being online. The government's move to 'digital by default' and the increasing number of goods and services available online mean that the digital revolution will continue apace and the GLA's role is to help Londoners be part of this revolution in whatever way is most practical and beneficial to them.

1.3. GLA's Digital Inclusion Strategy

Many of the commitments in the GLA's Digital Inclusion strategy are doing just this – improving the connectivity in London and supporting more Londoners to get online and take advantage of all things digital. But more can be done – particularly for those groups most excluded: older Londoners, disabled Londoners and Londoners who live in social housing. When this digital disadvantage is compounded by socio-economic disadvantage, digital exclusion soon becomes a very real barrier to learning, earning, and general well-being. There is also a well-documented digital skills gap among young Londoners (16-24) and that needs to be reduced if they are to successfully compete against their international peers who come to work in London's booming hi-tech industries.

2. Objectives and expected outcomes

To ensure that all Londoners who want to be online the GLA must strategically partner with like-minded organisations and scale up the collective effort. It is apparent that, given the range of barriers and diversity of needs, only a strong partnership across all sectors will succeed in making London digitally inclusive. The government has set up a Digital Inclusion Charter which commits signatories to jointly lead a cross-sector partnership focused on delivering a set of actions that means by 2016 it aims to have reduced the number of people who are offline by 25% (nationally) and will continue to do this every 2 years. If successful, by 2020 everyone who can be digitally capable will be.

The GLA is undertaking much of this Charter activity already and should consider becoming a signatory. It would also add legitimacy and the weight of collective support to our own digital inclusion efforts and would afford us an additional opportunity to further influence the government thinking and activity around digital inclusion. Currently, for example, the Charter is being refreshed (and will be re-launched in early 2016) to better reflect the challenges of DI in the constantly evolving digital landscape and the work the signatories are doing to reduce digital exclusion.

3. Equality comments

Due regard has been given to the equalities impacts of this project on those people who share protected characteristics compared with those who don't and the need to promote equality of opportunity and avoid discriminatory conduct in the light of the ongoing responsibilities of the GLA to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty when developing policy and making policy decisions.

There is variation in internet use across London with Bexley (14.1%) Haringey (13.1%) and Hounslow (11.6%) the boroughs with the highest percentage of "never used the internet" residents; Kensington & Chelsea (2.2%), Lambeth (3.3%) and Redbridge (4.2) having the lowest percentage of "never used the internet" resident.⁵ Digital inclusion impacts on different demographic groups differently also.

- In June 2015 ONS data stated that 27% of **disabled adults** had never used the internet, compared to 11% of non-disabled adults; a lack of training, accessibility and funding means the online world is a step too far for many disabled adults in the UK today. The Extra Costs Commission, launched by the disability charity Scope, did a year-long enquiry exploring the extra costs faced by disabled people, estimated to be on average £550 more a month. In the report released in June 2015 they cite that disabled people could save money by learning how to use the internet, for example by using cost comparison websites, yet disabled people were not online because of a lack of training, cost of equipment and the accessibility of web content.
- With **older Londoners** basic digital skills levels start to decline amongst the 45+ age bracket, with 65+ year olds having a Basic Digital Skills level of just 43% nationwide. This group also happens to have the lowest digital device ownership. And while digital exclusion may not impact on this cohort's employment prospects to the degree that it does for young Londoners, it does impact greatly on their mental and physical well-being, their financial health and their sense of independence and overall quality of life. Research by the Economic & Social Research Council into quality of life in old age found that wellbeing was primarily driven by psychological and social factors including independence and social interaction⁶.
- Londoners living in **social housing** are another group. Housing tenure is very much an indicator of whether an individual has ever used the internet. Access and affordability tend to be barriers for this cohort as does motivation and confidence. In 2013, 20% of Londoners who had never used the internet were in social housing.

4. Other considerations

a) key risks and issues

risk	mitigations	likelihood	impact
Reputational risk, if aims of charter are not met	The GLA is undertaking much of the charter already so the risk is minimal	1	1
The new administration does not want to be a signatory to this charter	There are no resource commitments associated with signing up to this charter, so should the new administration wish to exit the charter, there are no penalties	1	1

b) links to Mayoral strategies and priorities

Signing HMG DI Charter will support the digital community in London to ensure that London has the infrastructure in place to stay ahead of its competitors while enabling businesses and residents to

⁵ London Data store, 2014&15

⁶ <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/files/news-events-and-publications/evidence-briefings/independence-crucial-to-wellbeing-in-older-age-pdf/>

take full advantage of its benefits. Signing this charter will directly support the Mayor's wish contained in the following strategies:

1. **Digital Inclusion Strategy** - ensuring every Londoner is able to access the very best digital connectivity.
2. **Smart London Plan** - Using the creative power of new technologies to serve London and improve Londoners' lives
3. **London Infrastructure Plan 2050** – outlines the first ever attempt to identify, prioritise and cost London's future infrastructure.

Additionally:

4. This project will help meet the Mayor of London's youth priorities outlined in **Young Londoners – Successful Futures**. These priorities include: reducing child poverty, tackling disadvantage and improving children's life chances; reducing the number of children & young people who are NEET; and increasing youth crime prevention.
5. This programme will also meet the Mayor's **Economic Development Strategy** objective (4): to give all Londoners the opportunity to take part in London's economic success, access sustainable employment and progress in their careers.
6. It will also support the **Education Inquiry's** commitment to "increase educational attainment for young people and increase numbers of young Londoners entering higher education/ job market."

c.i) impact assessments

- See Section 6 for groups most affected by digital exclusion.

Recommendation 3 – Continue to support those groups with high rates of exclusion - outlines how the GLA can best support these three groups, who are the most digitally excluded of Londoners..

- **Older people** – work closely with Age UK and the GLA's Older People's Forum, to identify opportunities for support and action. For example, promote digital champions to work with older Londoners through Team London, offer to host Techy Tea Parties at City Hall with corporate sponsorship and/or volunteers. Age UK London are currently rolling out their 'My Borough' model for older people which includes support on: digital health (how to use online services to support their health care; book GP appointment/ get prescriptions filled, find support groups and advice on line for various chronic conditions; etc.) and Digital Democracy – how to lobby their local MP or councillor or how to register to vote online. This work is responding to the needs of this cohort and should be supported by the GLA.
- **Disabled people:** continue to work closely with disability advocacy groups through the GLA's **Deaf and Disabled Stakeholders Group** and with government department, local authorities and charities to promote digital inclusion within the disabled community, highlighting the cost savings, the positives of independent living and benefits of being online. In parallel, continue to work with mainstream organisations to ensure that the digital products and processes are accessible to those with disabilities.
- **Social Housing tenants:** Through the **Connected Housing Initiative**, the GLA needs to continue to encourage dialogue between housing associations and internet providers so internet providers can develop affordable, flexible and sustainable options for kit and connectivity for social housing residents.

c. ii) Consultations

Internal, informal consultations took place with variety of GLA units working directly or indirectly to improve the digital life of London including:

- * Re-generation,
- * Employment and Business Unit;
- * Education and Youth Team;
- * External relations,
- * GLA technology group;
- * Environmental and sustainability,
- * Diversity and Social Policy team.

5. Financial comments

The actions contained within the Charter will be incorporated and mainstreamed within existing GLA projects and budgets.

6. Legal comments

The proposal that the GLA becomes a signatory to the Digital Inclusion Charter is consistent with its general powers under section 30 of the GLA Act 1999 as it will promote social inclusion and improvement in Greater London.

7. Planned delivery approach and next steps

Activity	Timeline
Procurement of contract	NA
Announcement	February 2015
Signature Date	February 2015
Final evaluation start and finish (self/external) [delete as applicable]:	NA
Delivery End Date [for project proposals]	NA
Project Closure: [for project proposals]	NA

Appendices and supporting papers:

Appendix 1: Government's Digital Inclusion Charter

Public access to information

Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOI Act) and will be made available on the GLA website within one working day of approval.

If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.

Note: This form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after approval or on the defer date.

Part 1 Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

If YES, for what reason:

Until what date: (a date is required if deferring)

Part 2 Confidentiality: Only the facts or advice considered to be exempt from disclosure under the FOI Act should be in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form – NO

ORIGINATING OFFICER DECLARATION:

Drafting officer to
confirm the
following (✓)

Drafting officer:

Siobhán McKenna has drafted this report in accordance with GLA procedures and confirms that:

✓

Assistant Director/Head of Service:

Amanda Coyle has reviewed the documentation and is satisfied for it to be referred to the Sponsoring Director for approval.

✓

Financial and Legal advice:

The Finance and Legal teams have commented on this proposal, and this decision reflects their comments.

✓

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, RESOURCES:

I confirm that financial and legal implications have been appropriately considered in the preparation of this report.

Signature

M. J. O'Leary

Date

9.2.16

Appendix 1: UK Digital Inclusion Charter

www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/uk-

2014 marks the 25th anniversary of the World Wide Web, one of the greatest British inventions. Today the internet is not just at the heart of the global economy but at the centre of our society too. Despite that, 11 million people in the UK lack basic digital skills and capabilities. The consequences are profound. Without access, skills, motivation and trust people will continue to be digitally excluded, with a real social and human impact; affecting job prospects, health, education and more.

The same challenge applies equally to UK businesses and charities. Organisations are missing out on more effective marketing, offering a more convenient service to a wider group of customers and being able to save time and money. There is a lot of great work going on at a local and national level across government, public, private and voluntary sectors to help people and organisations go online, but digital exclusion remains a big issue. Maintaining momentum is not enough. To ensure that the web is for everyone, we need to bring together and scale up our efforts more than ever before. No single organisation can tackle this alone. We know, that given the range of barriers and diversity of needs, only strong partnership across all sectors will succeed.

We will work together in new ways, to create practical actions that can be delivered at scale. We will be transparent and open about what works and what doesn't and be open to new ideas and possibilities. We will align our respective efforts to work together towards a common aim. The government and signatories of the UK Digital Inclusion Charter will jointly lead a cross-sector partnership focused on delivering a set of actions that mean, by 2016 we will have reduced the number of people who are offline by 25%. We will continue to do this every 2 years. If we succeed, by 2020 everyone who can be digitally capable will be. *Together, we commit to:*

- Use a common definition of basic online skills and capabilities
- Support cross-sector national partnership programmes
- Identify and support best practice initiatives to grow through cross-sector working, including:
 - piloting and scaling up initiatives which bring support to where people are in their daily lives
 - embedding digital inclusion into partners' communications activity to encourage people, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and voluntary, community and social enterprises (VCSEs) to take the first steps to going online
 - piloting practical ways to make internet access, kit and digital skills cheaper and more easily available
- Make things simpler for users who lack basic online skills and capabilities by using a shared language
- Establish digitalskills.com as the trusted source of information about good quality help available to get people online
- Support the development of a national volunteering network of digital champions to enhance existing networks
- Support an online skills and capabilities programme for SMEs and VCSEs
- Share best practice and use data to measure performance and improve what we do
- Build the online skills and capabilities of people in our own organisations
- Work together to support the aims of the digital inclusion strategy

Signatories:

Organisations signed up to charter include:

- **Charitable organisations:** AbilityNet, Tinder Foundation, Age UK, BIG Lottery Fund, Carnegie UK Trust, E-Learning Foundation, NCVO, Remploy, Shelter, Small Charities Coalition, Salvation Army.
- **Private sector:** Accenture, EE, Three, E.ON, Asda, Barclays, BT, Google, Intel, Lloyds Banking Group, Microsoft, Sage

- **Public Sector:** Lambeth Council Local Government Association, BBC, Channel 4NHS England
Post Office NIACE Oxford Internet Institute, Affinity Sutton, National Housing Federation,
Red Kite.

