

Building an FE Workforce
fit for the future

future
now

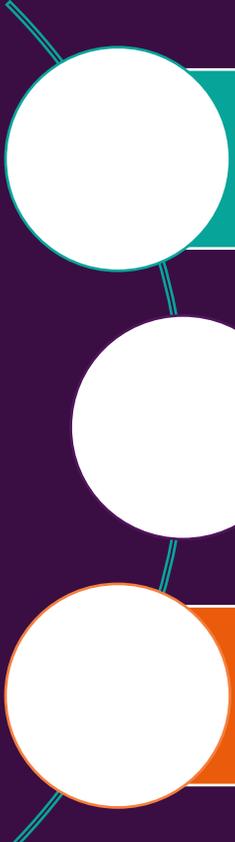


Barnsley
College



Colchester
Institute

What will we be covering today?



Closing the workforce digital skills gap

FE Colleges' responses

Closing and Q&A



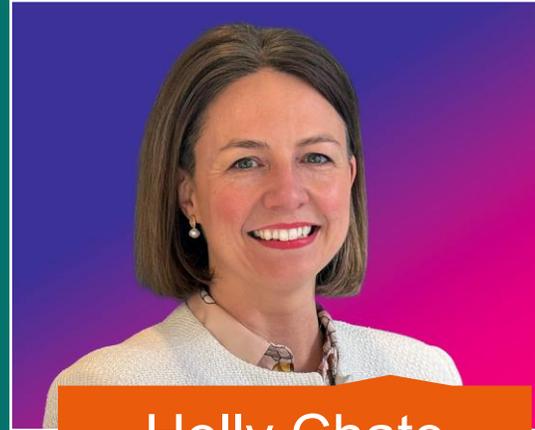
Who, in the room, is aware of the work of FutureDotNow?

Today's speakers- connect with us



Paul Saunders

Connect
with me:



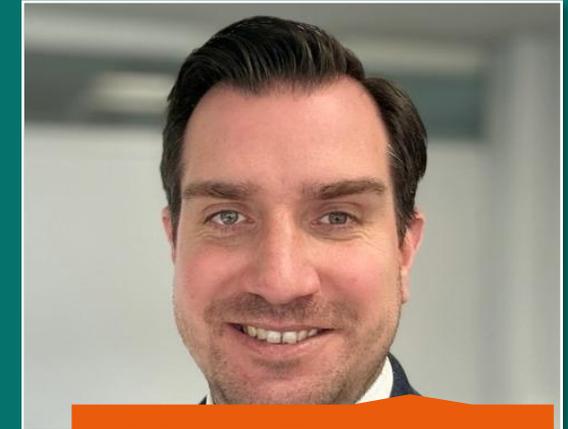
Holly Chate

Connect
with me:



David Akeroyd

Connect
with me:



Mark Emerson

Connect
with me:





Closing the workforce digital skills gap

FutureDotNow in partnership
with Gateway Qualifications and AELP

JANUARY 2026



Our time today

- 01 Essential Digital Skills Gap
- 02 FutureDotNow: Our strategy to close the gap
- 03 How you can get involved



01

Essential Digital Skills gap



Developed by Government and Industry, the Essential Digital Skills Framework brings specificity to basic digital skills

Life Skills

26 tasks

Work Skills

20 tasks

Foundation Level

8 tasks



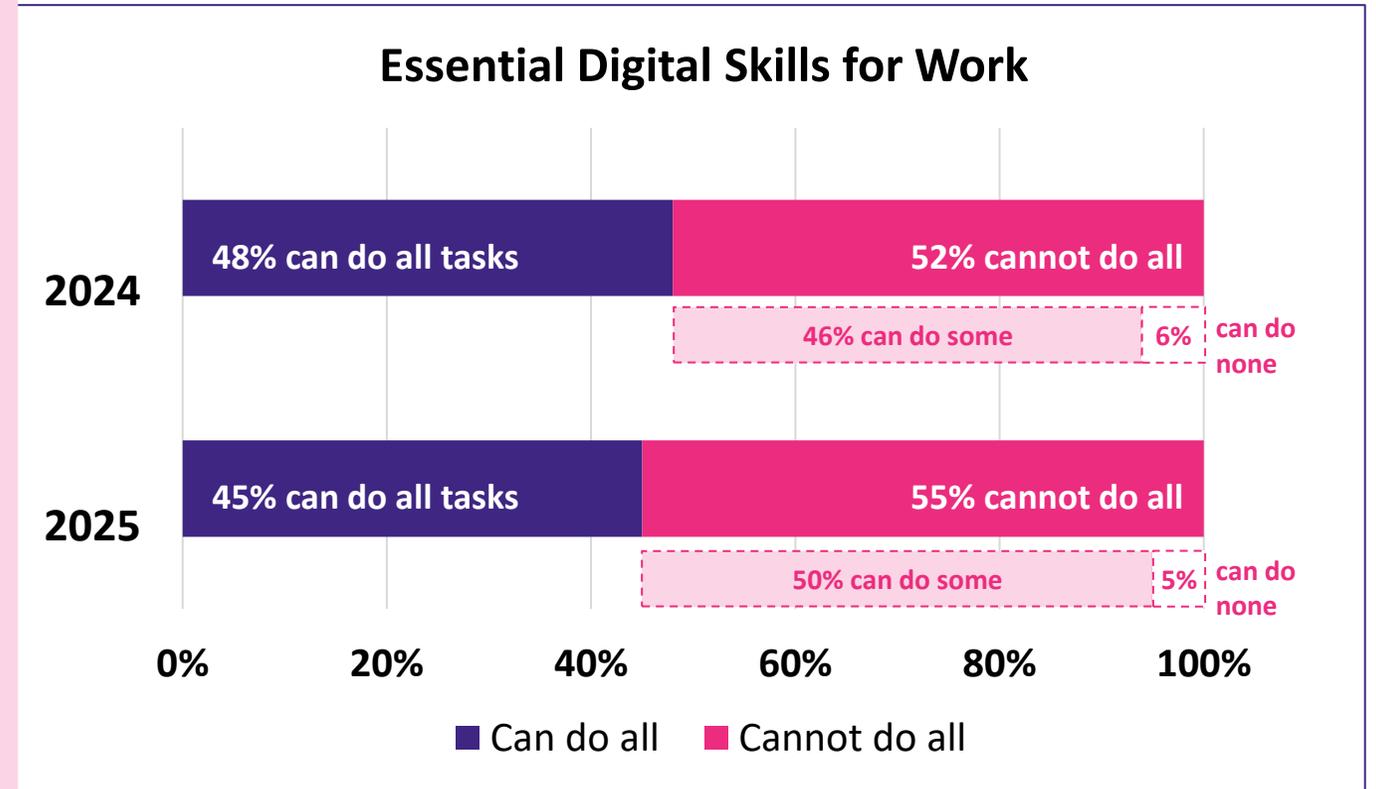
You can find the framework at futureskills.gov.uk/about-us/the-essential-digital-skills-framework/

Tech is accelerating, but people aren't keeping up

Those who can do all essential digital tasks has dropped from 48% last year, to 45% this year.

Digital capability gap is growing among working age adults

- UK growth dependent on building digitally literate, AI-confident, nation
- Pace of tech transformation unprecedented
- Race to keep up given changing face of work and how AI and other emerging technologies reshaping it
- Working-age adults present UK's greatest digital upskilling opportunity
- Huge potential for economic and social impact



This is not an advanced skills gap

c.22 million (55%) adults
unable to do things like

Check their payslip
online

Set secure passwords

Use digital tools to
improve productivity

The gap cuts across every sector, region and demographic, including some unexpected areas

Communities in which the gap is more pronounced:

65% of part-time workers

63% in the retail sector

67% of older workers

63% of those with an impairment

cannot complete all 20 tasks⁷

Groups often assumed to be 'high performers':

c.1 in 4 tech sector workers (27%)

c.1 in 3 workers earning over £75,000 p/a (31%)

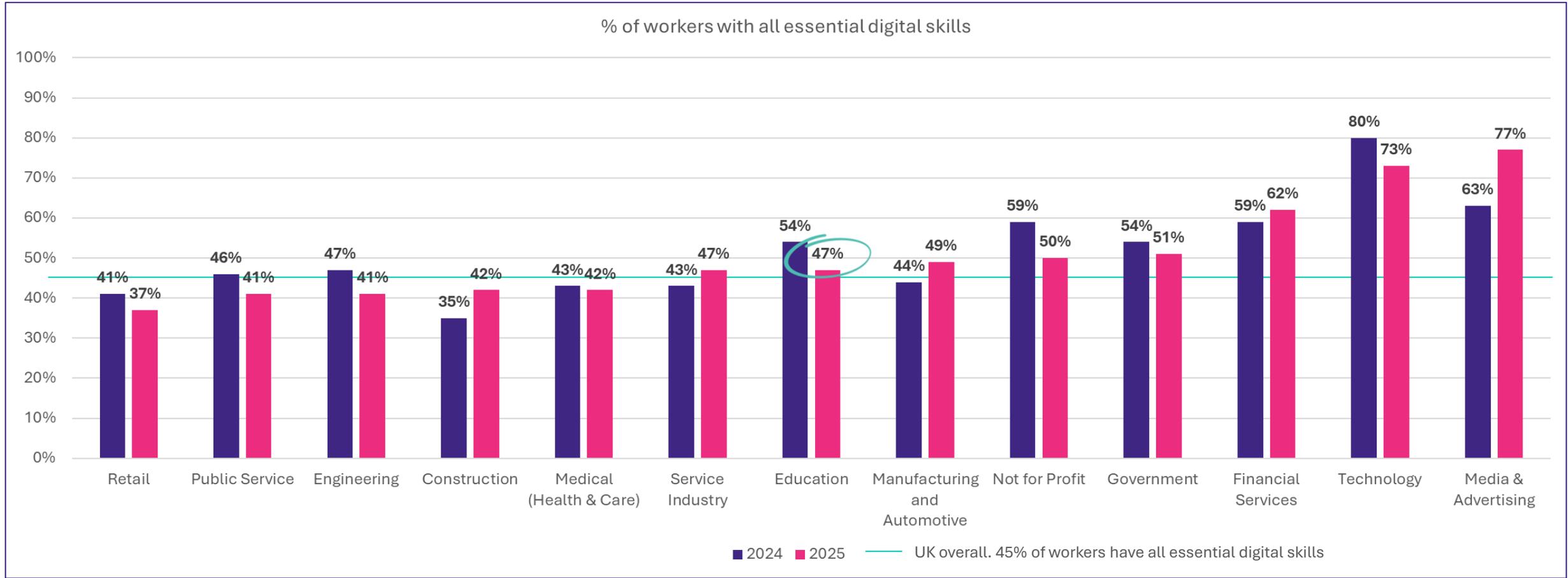
c.1 in 2 people with a degree /Masters/PhD (44%)

c.1 in 2 18-24 yr olds (52%)

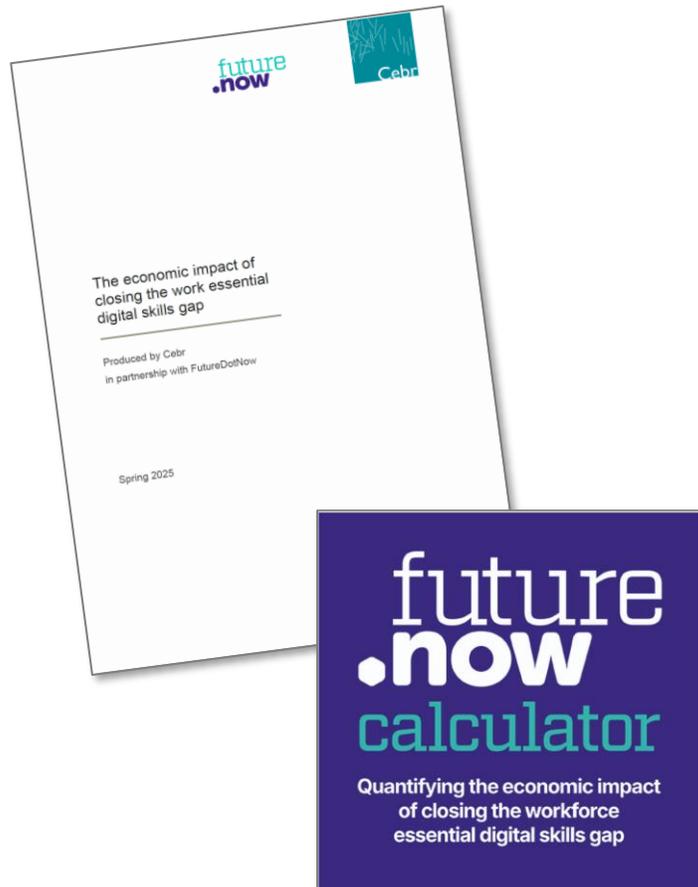
cannot complete all 20 tasks⁷

The sector story is revealing

Digital skill levels in the Education workforce has worsened, down to 47% from 54% last year.



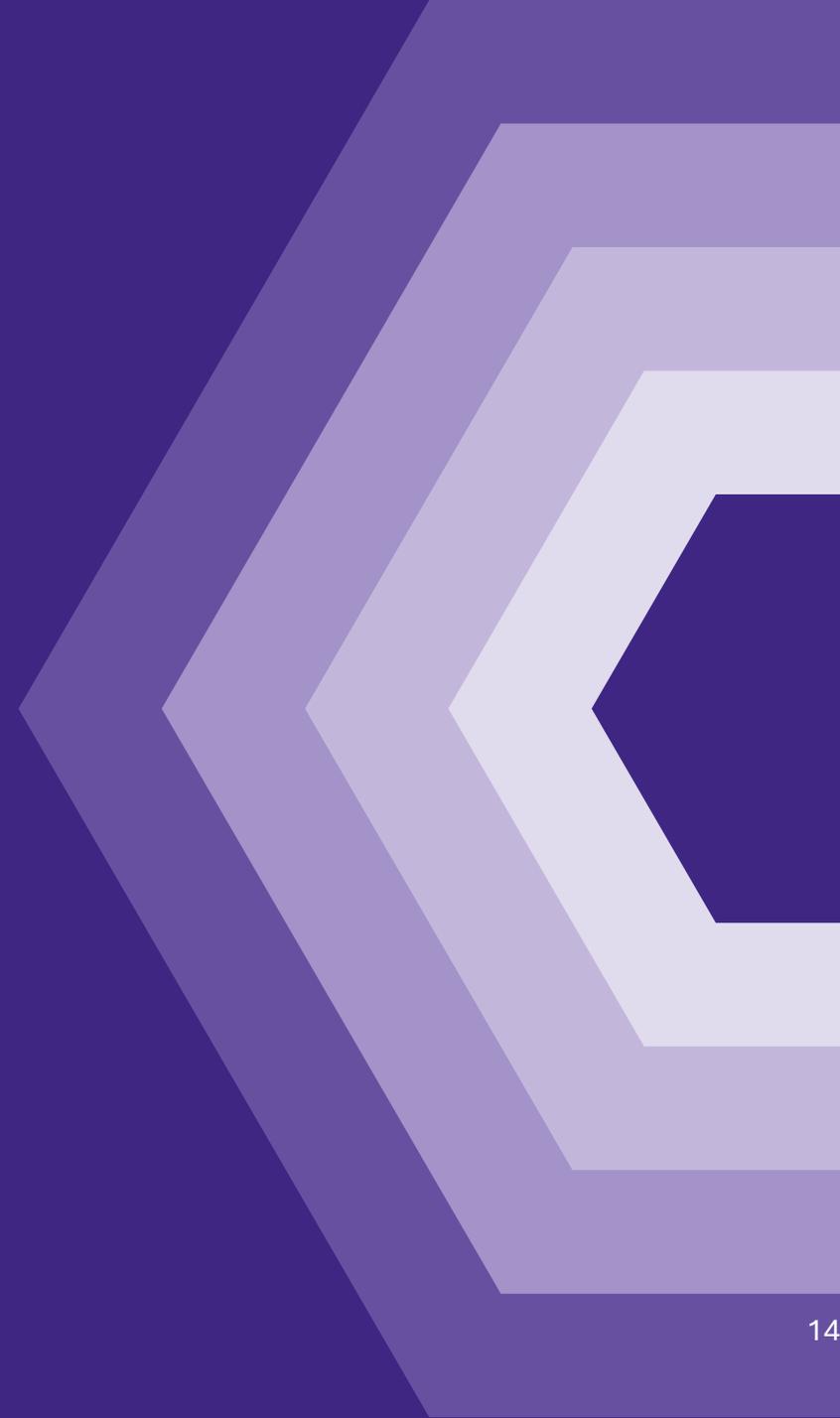
FutureDotNow research confirms there is significant economic gain from equipping workers with the 20 Work tasks



THE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY			
For individuals	For the UK		For business
£897	£10.3 billion	£23.1 billion	£8.5 billion
Average earnings uplift per full-time worker per year	Aggregate earnings uplift per year	Annual productivity gain (GVA uplift)	Annual profitability gain (GOS uplift)

02

FutureDotNow: Our strategy to close the gap



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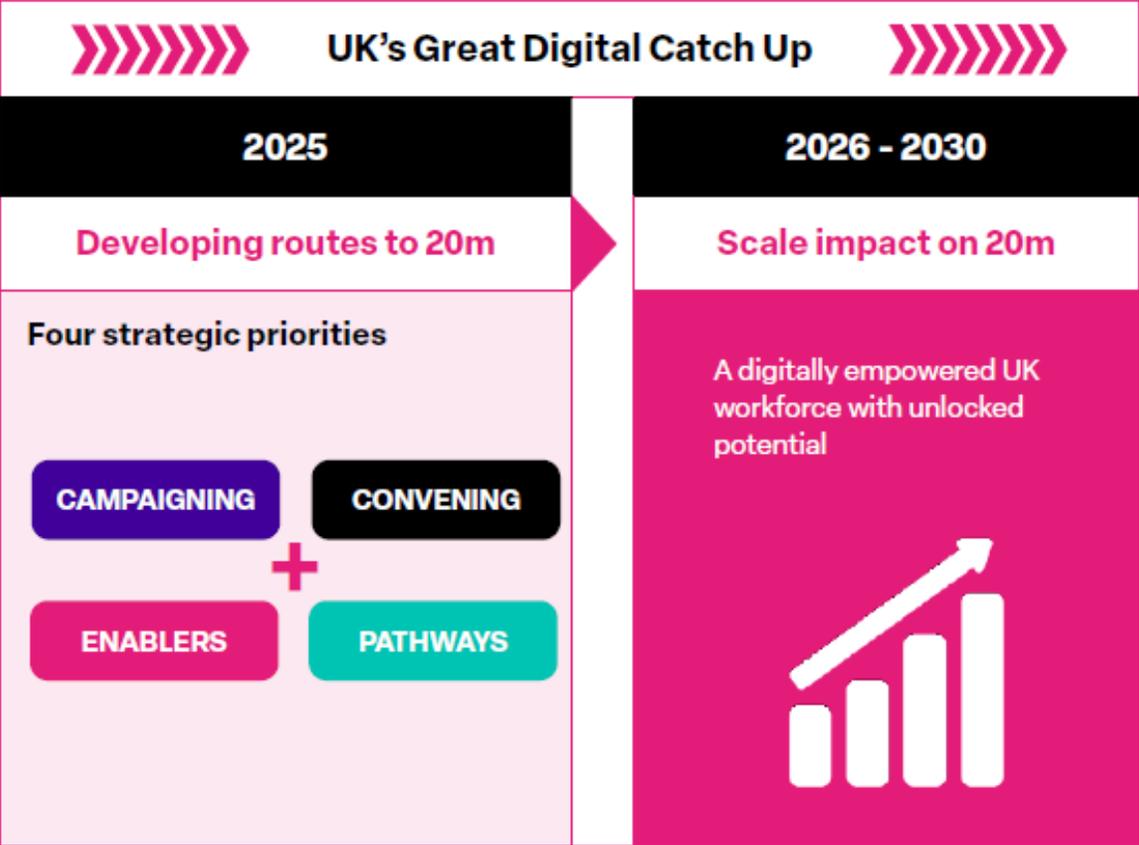
UK Charity

**230+ member organisations,
across public, private and third sectors**

**Uniting business to close
the UK workforce digital skills gap**



Routes to 20m – A five-year strategy



futuresdotnow.uk/routes-to-20m

Strong cross sector collaboration



CAMPAIGNING

Influencing business action, public policy and, ultimately, individual behaviour.

FutureDotNow will continue to campaign to secure attention on the need to supercharge essential digital skills in working age adults.

- **Public policy:** We will continue to work to embed the needs of working age adults in the digital inclusion agenda, alongside the three core asks of government established in 2024
- **Mobilising the Workforce Digital Skills Charter:** We will campaign to increase the number of Charter signatories at scale, including targeting the FTSE350
- **Media and key influencers:** We will continue to work to increase awareness of the workforce essential digital skills challenge as critical to UK and personal prosperity
- **Authoritative insight:** We will create external cut-through by leveraging new content, for example the Economic Impact Report

CONVENING

Providing sustainable coordinating capability, with shared measures.

FutureDotNow will continue to set clear direction and focus on sustaining an environment that makes it easy for members to participate and drive change.

- **Powerful vision and plan for action:** Set clear direction, with a milestone-based programme of work that builds momentum and delivers progress
- **Coordination and collaboration:** Continue to mobilise and coordinate a community of changemakers, by creating the infrastructure for targeted and effective collaboration
- **Shared measurement:** Develop and convene attention around a consistent set of shared metrics
- **Scalable assets:** Continue to create high-quality, scalable content that supports members to close the digital skills gap and attracts many more organisations to join the coalition

Enablers and Pathways

Enablers focus on priority problems, with Pathways providing route to engage business and test and scale solutions

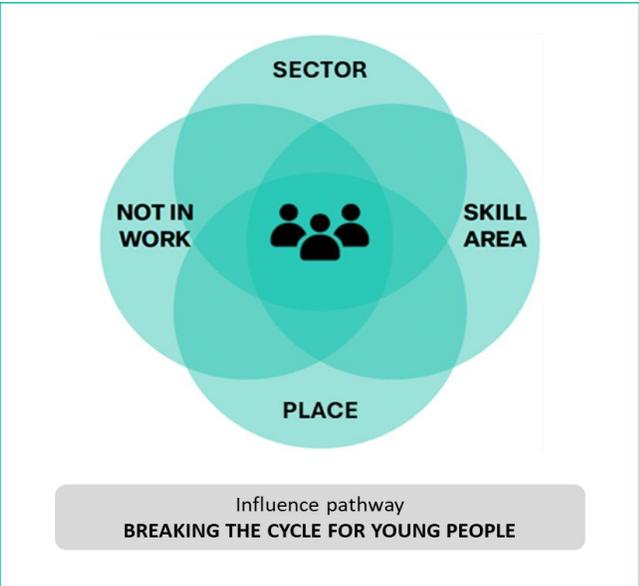
Enablers

The 'engine room' of cross sector collaboration focused on solving priority problems that make it harder to close the workforce digital skills gap.

1	Future-fit Work Skills Framework
2	Economic Impact
3	Social Value
4a	Training: Content
4b	Training: Accreditation and Digital Badging
5	Motives and Confidence
6	Measuring impact
7	Needs of Small and Medium Enterprises

Pathways

Satellite teams provide the routes to people at scale. They expand reach into their networks, raise awareness, and use resources from enabler teams.



Lots of progress in the first year

Created **scale routes to market** in **Construction, Health & Care and Education**

Greater attention from government - opportunity beginning to be properly understood

Uncovered the **£23bn productivity prize** for the UK

Economic calculator to model the economic impact locally

Identified **four AI skills every worker needs**

New **AI-embedded Essential Digital Skills Framework**

New insight into how essential digital skills create **social value** and improve lives

Organisational Maturity Framework

Learning that clicks - Evidence-based actions to help employers boost workforce digital skills

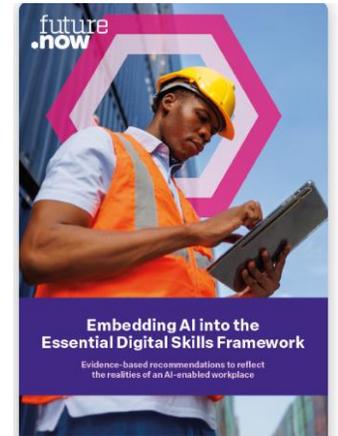
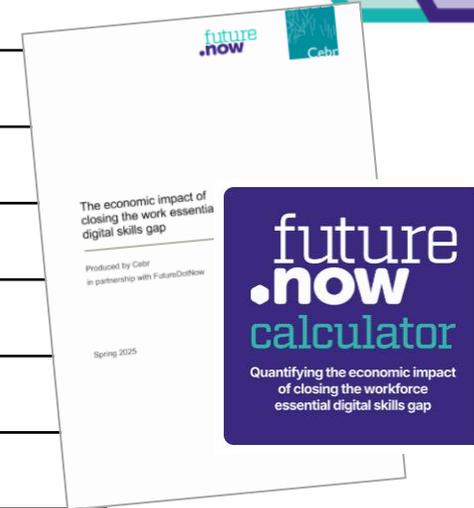
Updated **Self Assessment Guide**, now including the new AI skills

Refreshed **Learning Directory** of training courses

222 Charter signatories, reaching **over 2m workers**

3 sprints of cross-sector action behind a single, shared goal

1 Workforce Digital Skills **Summit**, bringing over 150 leaders from industry and govt. together



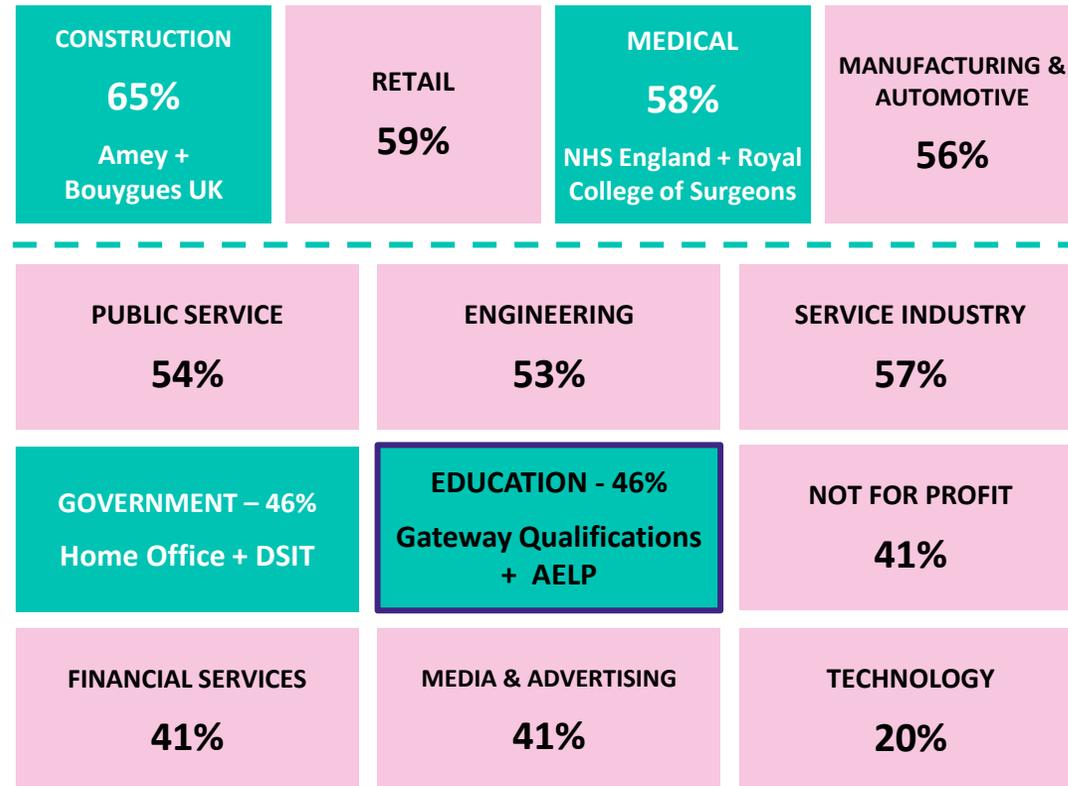
Using heatmaps to mobilise Sectors

Two sponsors secured
Sponsorship available
X% Those without all essential digital skills for work tasks

PATHWAY 1: SECTOR

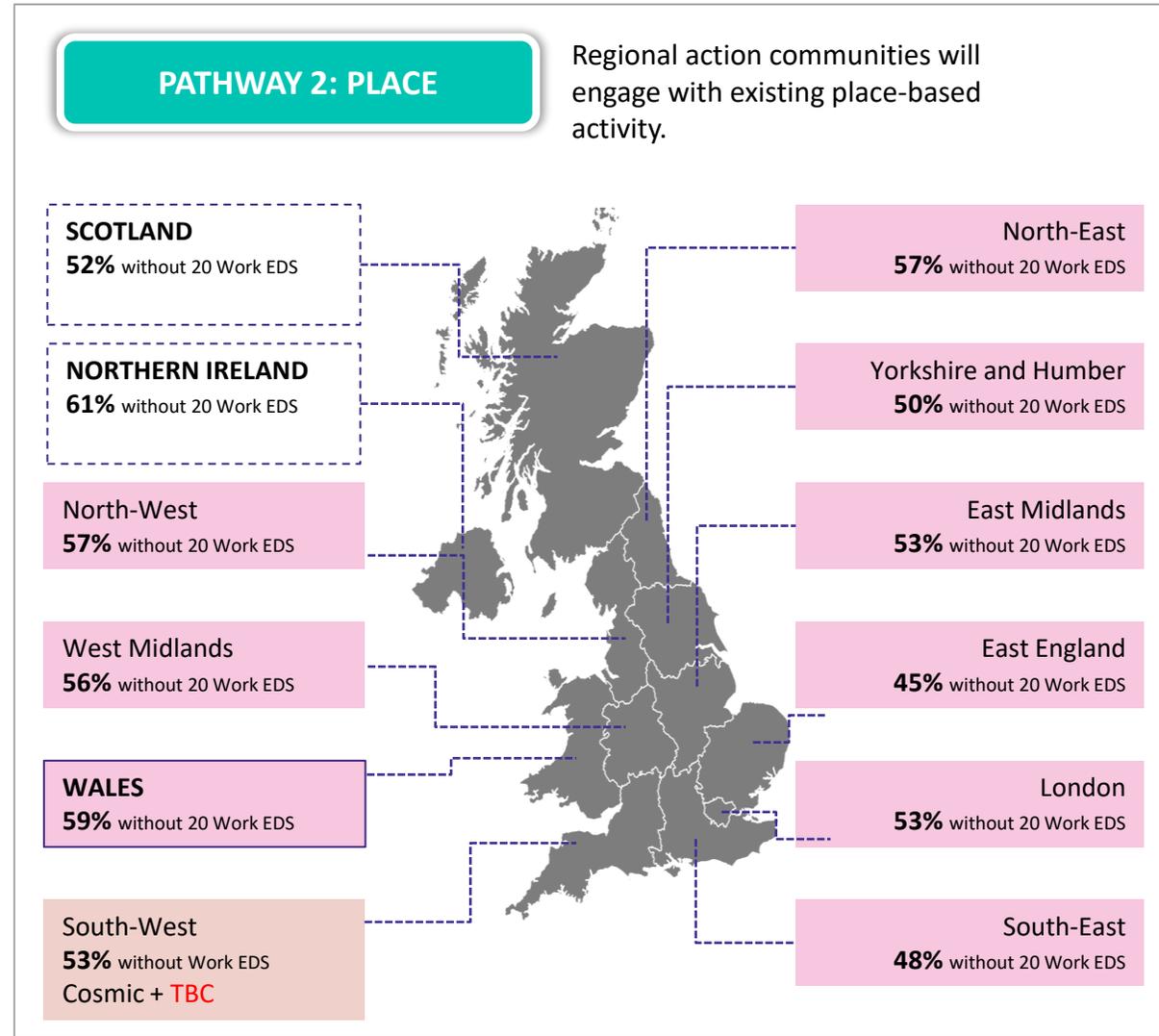
Sector-based action communities, will each be 'sponsored' by (ideally) two business leaders.

PRIORITY SECTORS FOR 2025

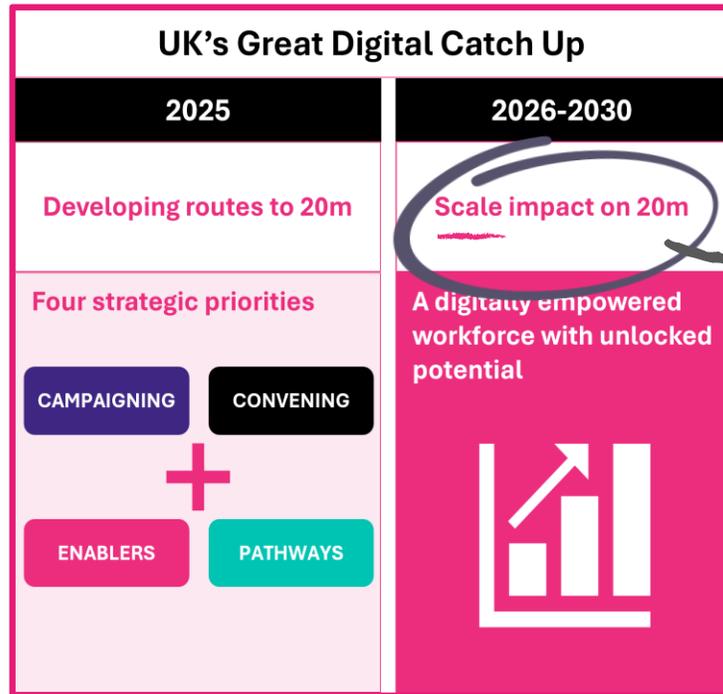


Using heatmaps to mobilise Regions

	Two sponsors secured
	Sponsorship available – one sponsor secured
	Sponsorship available – one sponsor secured
X%	Those without all essential digital skills for work tasks



Strategy unchanged in 2026, emphasis shift



Two themes for 2026

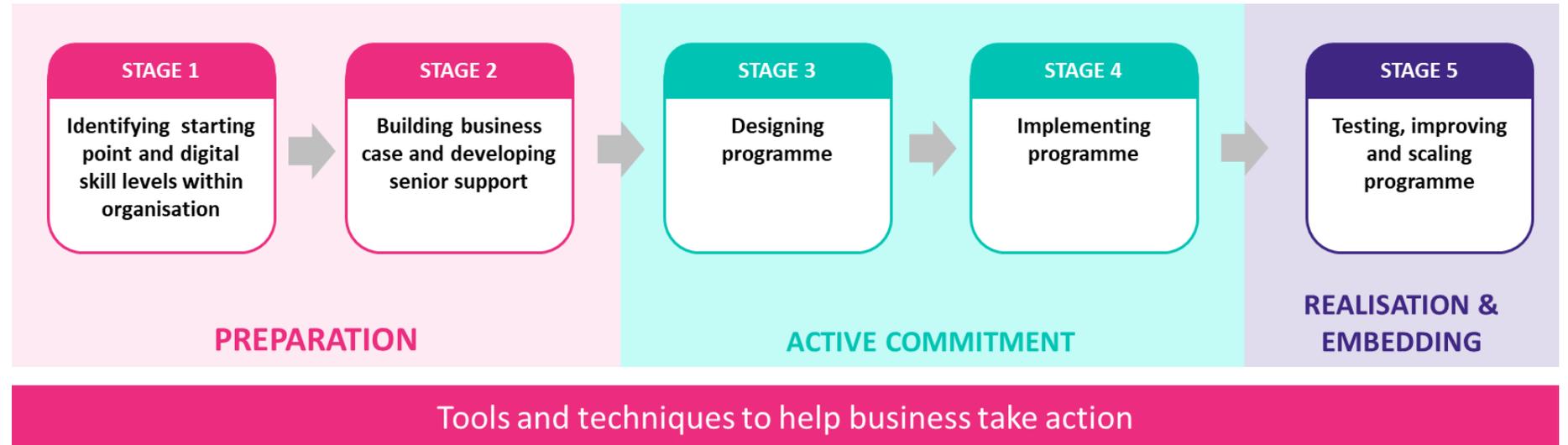
1. Engage more businesses

2. Provide tools & techniques to help business take action

Organisational Maturity Framework

Majority of business (59%) surveyed to date are still in the Preparation stages

In 2025, we built significant amount of content designed to help businesses take action. Helping businesses access this content effectively and efficiently will be a priority. We will curate existing tools and resources into bitesize 'what works' guides mapped to the different stages in the Essential Digital Skills Organisational Maturity Framework to help businesses find relevant content quickly and efficiently.



How to get involved

Three ways to join the coalition and support the mission

Commit to the mission, take action, shape the national agenda



Sign the Workforce Digital Skills Charter

The Charter is a shared statement of ambition calling for focused action to close the essential digital skills gap in the UK workforce.



Become a FutureDotNow member

Our members gain access to exclusive resources and events to help improve the digital skills of the workforce.

They're invited to join a national change programme of leading organisations driving systemic action.

They can raise their profile as an industry leader in a critical agenda impacting economic growth, productivity and breaking down barriers to opportunity for all.



Join our Strategic Partner community

Our Strategic Partners provide invaluable financial support, strategic advice, advocacy, and additional pro-bono resources.

Sign the Workforce Digital Skills Charter

Commit to the mission

A shared statement of ambition, designed to ensure upskilling the workforce in the essential digital skills is recognised as a critical part of the UK's digital skills challenge.



It's a rallying cry for concerted and focused action to close the essential digital skills gap in the UK workforce.

The Charter represents a public commitment to take action, both individually and collectively, to build a future-fit, digitally confident workforce.

Join us as we commit to:

1. **Raising awareness** of the essential digital skills gap in the workforce and the opportunity to be realised through concerted action.
2. **Working together** as part of a national change program to supercharge action on workforce digital skills.
3. **Empowering people** of working age to build-solid digital foundations.



How to sign the charter

<https://futuresdotnow.uk/charter/>

Become a FutureDotNow member

Take action



Upskill your workforce

We can help you understand, measure and ultimately, close the workforce digital skills gap in your organisation.



Join national change programme

You'll be invited to join a cross-sector delivery community that's driving action on the essential digital skills gap across the UK workforce.



Raise your profile

With priority access to flagships, you can be seen as an industry leader in a critical national agenda while connecting with industry peers.

Join us today

FutureDotNow membership is paid annually, based on organisation size

As well as gaining access to resources to support the digital capability of your organisation, you'll also be making a small but critical contribution to the running costs of FutureDotNow, the UK's leading charity working to close the UK's workforce digital skills gap.

Organisation size	Cost ¹
Fewer than 50 employees	£250
50–999 employees	£1000
More than 1,000 employees	£5,000

<https://futuresdotnow.uk/membership/>

Our 2025 Strategic Partners





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hello@future.dotnow.uk



Early Steps

Embedding Digital Confidence Across the College

Mark Emerson

Context

- Entry Level to Level 7 provision
 - 16-19
 - Adult
 - Apprenticeships
 - HE
- 2 'Main' Campuses
- Circa £50 million turnover
- 800+ Staff



Digital Strategy Themes

Enhancing Digital Skills for All

Ensure all learners and staff are equipped with the digital skills needed to succeed in education, life, and work.



Embedding Digital in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Integrate digital tools and pedagogy to enhance learner engagement, personalisation, and assessment.



Streamlining Operations through Digital Transformation

Digitise and automate business processes to improve efficiency, sustainability, and staff experience.



Using Data and Analytics for Continuous Improvement

Use real-time data and insights to drive academic improvement, support services, and strategic planning.



Strengthening Digital Infrastructure and Cybersecurity

Ensure robust, secure, and scalable digital systems that support teaching, learning, and operations



Driving Innovation through Emerging Technologies and Partnerships

Cultivate a culture of experimentation using cutting-edge tech, in collaboration with employers and industry.



Digital capability is not about technology, it's about people, culture, and confidence.

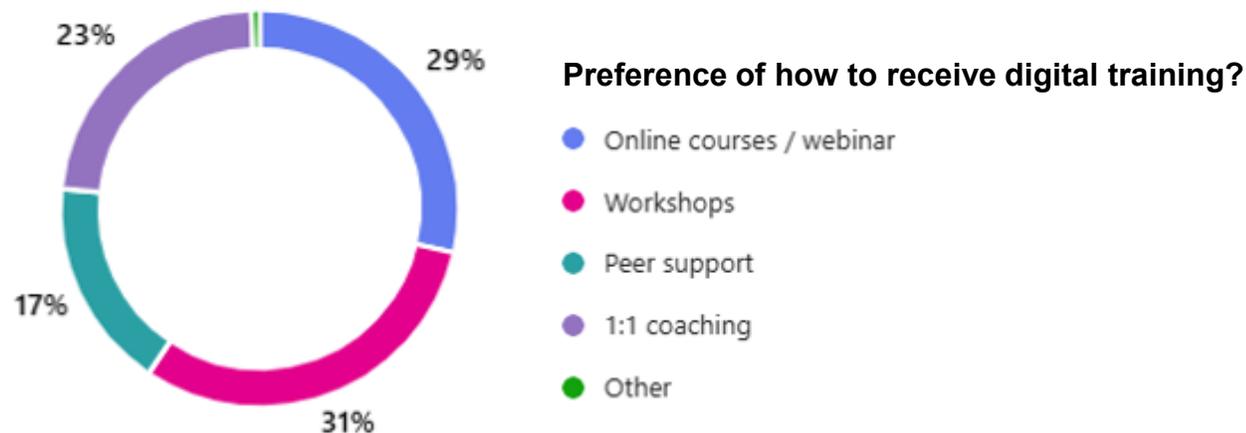
Where are we coming from?

16% felt they had **basic** or **beginner** levels of IT literacy or confidence

43% felt they had **advanced** or **expert** levels of IT literacy or confidence

37% felt they had received **sufficient training** over last year

46% felt their confidence and ability had **improved** over the last 12 months



Pathways to Digital Confidence



- Gamification / Badging of set goals
- Varied support – ILT Team, New Expert Practitioners, New Tech Champs
- Training is self-paced
- Bite-size delivery – with assessment (early wins)
- Looking to specialise for job role
- Varied delivery methods
- All staff should have digital literacy / confidence personal objective

Looking Ahead: Measuring Success

When staff digital confidence grows, everything improves.

- Curriculum innovation – creative, tech-enabled learning design
- Operational efficiency – smarter systems, less friction
- Engagement & wellbeing – confidence replaces frustration

We'll know we've succeeded when

- Innovative use of EdTech is **seen in every relevant observation**
- Learners **notice** and **value** digitally confident staff
- Digital pathways **evolve continuously** through feedback and data

We don't just want digitally skilled staff - we want a digitally confident culture.

Workforce Digital Skills including AI

David Akeroyd – Principal & CEO



Strategic Commitment

- Long-standing strategic priority:
 - Equipping staff and students with the digital and AI skills for their future

Microsoft Showcase Status

- Early adopter and long-standing accreditation
- Commitment to Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert (MIEE) scheme:
 - Highest number of any institution worldwide
- Microsoft Ambassador College

Staff Training

- All staff can access any course at the College free of charge
- Digital units
 - Basic digital skills
 - Cyber Security
 - Artificial Intelligence



Are you ready to sign the digital charter?



Are you ready to be a FutureDotNow member?

Questions?

future
•now



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