CarnegieUK TRUST

CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

100 YEARS 1913 – 2013

S4M-09575: Developing Skills for Scotland's Digital Economy

Briefing Response 2014

The Carnegie UK Trust is an independent, charitable trust, which for 100 years has worked to improve the lives and wellbeing of people across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Find more information on our website **www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk**.

Why Digital Skills Matter

Digital skills are essential to the wellbeing of communities and citizens in Scotland in the 21st century. Indeed the web has been described by some as 'the fourth utility' and it is vital that people have the skills, confidence, motivation and opportunity to take advantage of new digital technologies.

If people have these skills then they can access services more easy, achieve higher levels of educational attainment and improve their employment prospects, all of which benefits local and national economies. There is also a demand-side argument to the need to boost digital skills, as businesses will prosper if more people have the skills and capabilities to buy goods and services online.

The Challenge

Data from the Tinder Foundation shows that some people are far more likely to lack digital skills than others. Their research shows that the 'offline population' in the UK includes:

- 61% of people aged 65+
- 60% of people with no qualifications
- 49% of people who are disabled
- 42% of people with an annual income of less than £12,500

This matters, as these are the very same households who are also likely to be struggling on a whole range of other measures of social and economic prosperity. As technology gets better and faster, and the digital skills of the majority of the population develop further, the divide between those who are connected and those who are not will grow ever wider unless we take action. The development of digital skills should provide an opportunity for us to tackle inequality – it must not exacerbate existing divides.

What Can Be Done?

In March 2014 the Carnegie UK Trust published 'Making Digital Real: Case Studies of How to Help the Final Fifth Get Online'. In this report we set out seven 'Digital Participation Tests' that public, private and voluntary organisations wishing to tackle digital exclusion and build digital skills can use to assess their activities in this area.

These tests are as follows:

1. Show leadership

Make digital participation and digital skills priority issues and have clear strategies on these. All policies, programmes and initiatives can be 'digital-proofed' to assess to what extent they impact on those who are not connected and what

opportunities exist to help those who are offline to get access and build their digital skills.

2. Co-operate

A whole range of different organisations have a role to play in tackling digital exclusion and developing digital skills. This work must go to where people are and engage with them in their everyday life. This means that businesses, local government services, housing associations, health providers, libraries, charities, community groups and post offices have all got a vital contribution to make. But each partner needs to play to their own strengths and find a way of engaging that works for them.

3. Have a plan

The target population for the development of digital skills is diverse and dispersed. Many organisations want to help tackle digital exclusion and build these skills, which is highly positive. But if there isn't a clear plan about how this will be done then there is a risk of both duplication and of people 'falling between the gaps'.

4. Focus on the person not the tech

Every person has a hobby or interest, and there is content online related to every hobby. It can be beneficial if conversations with people about going online and developing digital skills start with their personal interests – not necessarily with the technology.

5. Be holistic

For most people who are not online or who are lacking in digital skills there is no single barrier which is preventing them from getting connected. Issues of cost, confidence and motivation are all highly relevant. An approach to helping people develop their digital skills must also consider each of these issues otherwise it is unlikely to succeed.

6. Involve communities

The internet is by definition a method of social engagement. It therefore makes sense that activities to help people develop their digital skills should be social too. Peer learning has a vital role to play.

7. Make it fun

The internet brings great social and economic benefits but it should be a source of enjoyment too. We're still in the early phases of learning how to help people develop digital skills and we should not be afraid to be innovative and make it fun.

The Carnegie UK Trust works to improve the lives of people throughout the UK and Ireland, by changing minds through influencing policy, and by changing lives through innovative practice and partnership work. The Carnegie UK Trust was established by Scots-American philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in 1913 and we are delighted to be celebrating our centenary in 2013. Please see our website for further information on our centenary plans.

Andrew Carnegie House
Pittencrieff Street
Dunfermline
KY12 8AW

Tel: +44 (0)1383 721445
Fax: +44 (0)1383 749799
Email: info@carnegieuk.org
www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk

For more information please contact Acting Head of Policy, Douglas White at douglas@carnegieuk.org

April 2014

CarnegieUK TRUST

CHANGING MINDS • CHANGING LIVES

100 YEARS

1913 – 2013

Carnegie United Kingdom Trust
Scottish charity SC 012799 operating in the UK and Ireland
Incorporated by Royal Charter 1917