

# Let's Fix The Digital Divide - for Good

Good Things Foundation Strategy  
2022 - 2025



Good Things  
Foundation

# We're changing the way we work

The Covid 19 pandemic has significantly changed the way we all live and work. It led to an acceleration in the adoption and application of digital technology which has been transformative for both people and businesses.

This has been the dominant and familiar narrative that we've all heard, read and seen. The less familiar story is this: the pandemic has deepened the digital divide, leaving the most vulnerable people lagging further behind. There are 2 million households that struggle to afford internet access in the UK today, and 10 million adults lack the most basic digital skills. We need to act now and we need your help to take the necessary steps to remove digital exclusion.

The pandemic didn't create the digital divide - but it did expose and exacerbate it. Fixing the digital divide is an urgent priority.

By the end of 2025, our ambition is to:

Engage  
1 million people  
helping them to benefit from the digital world



Grow and support  
5,000 Digital Inclusion Hubs  
across the nation to respond to local needs



# Our ambition

The way we operate as a charity and the way we understand digital exclusion has shifted. We have one mission: to Fix The Digital Divide – for Good.

**This mission is our moonshot and it will require collaborative and innovative partnerships to succeed.**

Our new strategy sets out how we will take forward our mission, reflecting on what we have learned and the urgent action that is needed.

Good Things Foundation launched an emergency response when the UK first went into lockdown, providing devices and data to people cut off in their homes.

This helped our community partners respond to the needs of digitally excluded people in their communities, as well as showing the commitment, creativity and resilience that are the hallmarks of the UK's voluntary and community sector.

We are now developing and scaling this model – bringing data and devices into the heart of our action, alongside basic digital skills and building confidence and motivation. We will ensure that any community organisation, anywhere, has the support they need to Fix The Digital Divide in their community.

We want:

Everyone to have the internet access they need



Everyone to have somewhere local to go for help to use the internet



Everyone to feel able and safe in the online world





Our mission:  
To Fix The Digital Divide – for Good

# The digital divide in the UK

In the UK today:

Nearly  
1 in 5  
adults

lack the most basic  
digital skills needed  
for everyday life<sup>1</sup>

Over  
1 in 20

households have no  
internet access, neither  
fixed line nor mobile<sup>2</sup>

2  
million

households struggle  
with affordability of  
internet access<sup>3</sup>

Although 1.5 million more people went online during the Covid-19 pandemic<sup>4</sup>, in some groups - older, less affluent groups, including people with impairments and health conditions - digital engagement actually declined<sup>5</sup>.

This means that many people remain excluded from the internet - and from the economic benefits it brings, such as saving money, improved job prospects and the ability to work flexibly. They are also locked out of the lives we live online: limiting social connection, reinforcing loneliness, and cutting people off from easy access to information, learning and essential services.

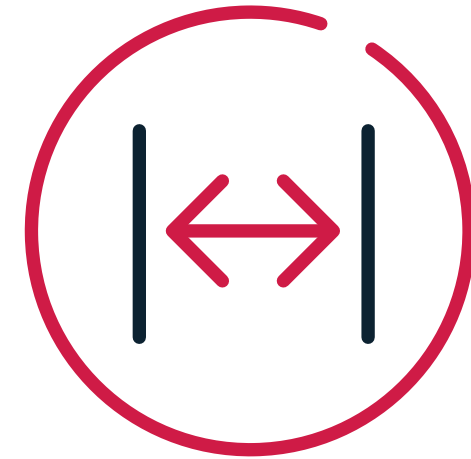
The number of people without all of the most basic 'foundation' digital skills is not improving<sup>6</sup>.

The digital divide may have narrowed in the past two years, but it has also deepened.

# Change is needed

The UK faces a prolonged period of economic uncertainty, and poverty will continue to drive digital exclusion alongside age and education levels. Those facing greatest hardship will suffer most. We have learned that Fixing The Digital Divide will take a different kind of response, because:

1. The current pace of progress will not fix the digital divide



The digital divide has narrowed but it has also deepened, leaving the most excluded even further behind. There needs to be an acceleration in digital inclusion action, prioritising those experiencing the greatest barriers. Progress across the UK is not fast enough.

2. What works is a tailored and trusted approach to supporting our most vulnerable

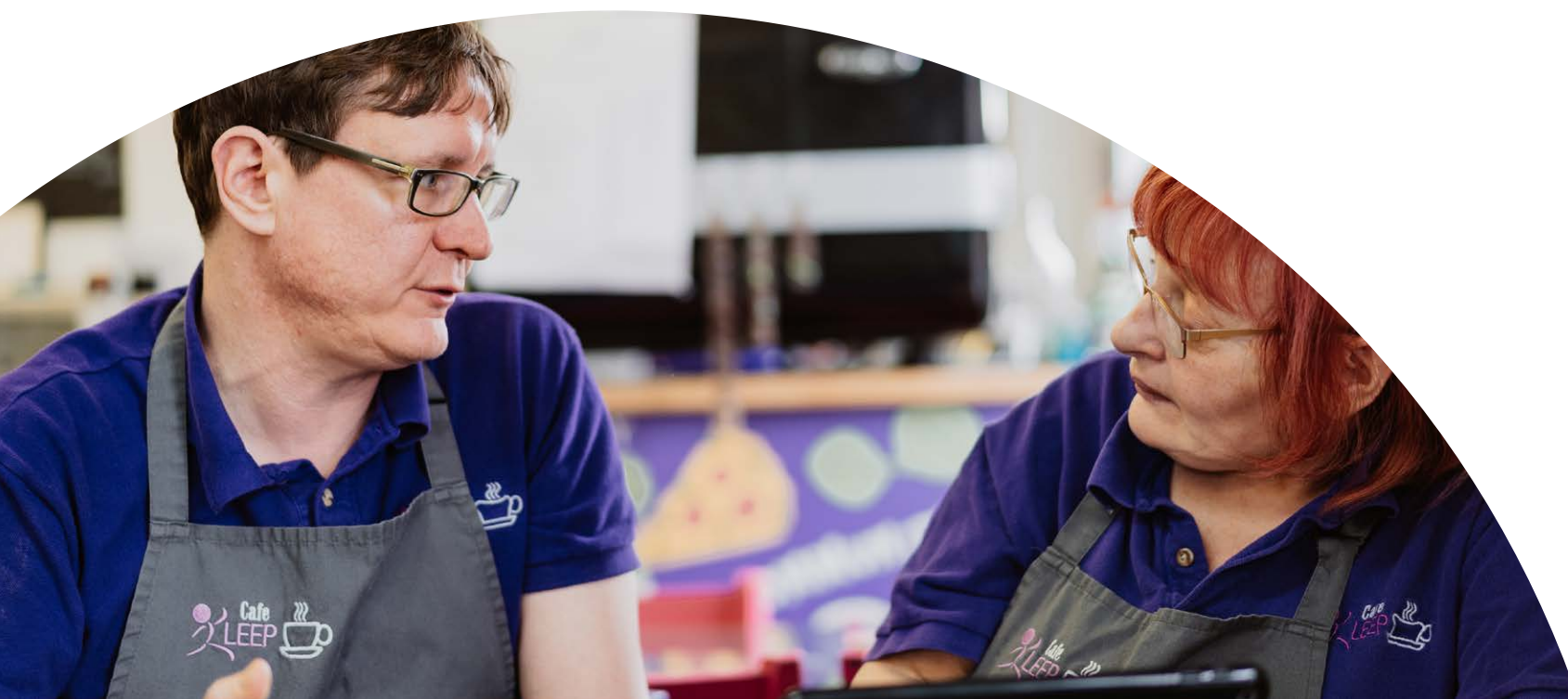


People need a digital inclusion offer which reflects their individual needs - including devices, internet data, and support. And this offer is best delivered by trusted local organisations coordinated nationally so that the impact will be even greater than if they delivered alone.

3. The UK needs a strong social infrastructure for digital inclusion



Good Things Foundation will enable the growth of digital inclusion at scale across the UK. We will provide a comprehensive offer for digitally excluded people. We will work in a new way, delivering this offer as a sustainable service that any local organisation can use to Fix The Digital Divide. We will partner to embed the offer in policies and programmes that promote social and economic inclusion.



# Our new strategy

Our mission is to Fix The Digital Divide - for Good, to ensure everyone can benefit from the digital world. To do this, we need an ambitious and far-reaching change to the UK's social infrastructure.

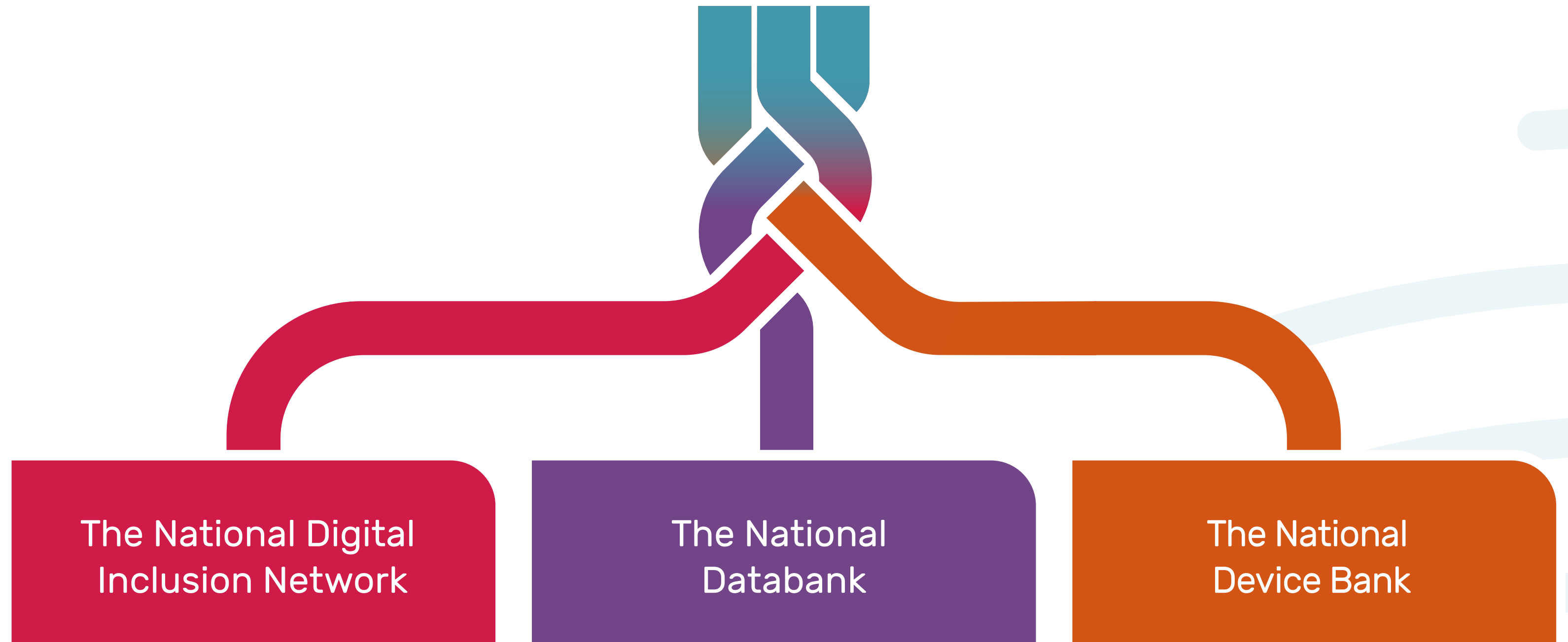
We are scaling up and expanding our work in the UK to ensure everyone can benefit from digital.

To achieve our mission, we have developed a comprehensive service for digitally excluded people. An offer which any local organisation - anywhere in the UK - can use to Fix the Digital Divide in their communities.



 **Good Things**  
Foundation

Delivering our mission to  
Fix the Digital Divide - for Good



# A new social infrastructure to tackle digital exclusion

## 1. The National Digital Inclusion Network

Our National Digital Inclusion Network brings together everything we know about what makes digital inclusion work in communities. We will expand our Network so that excluded people in every community have the local help they need. Building and scaling what is already working, we will partner with national, regional and local charities, and all community organisations working with digitally excluded people. We will provide a simple package of support, training and resources that helps them respond to their communities' needs for digital skills and inclusion. This includes Learn My Way, Good Things Foundation's community-focused learning platform for basic digital skills, designed to make building digital confidence easy.

" With my new digital skills I managed to secure a new part time job immediately. I never thought I would be able to have a job like that as it was always just a dream, but completing these courses has improved my confidence and raised my ambitions."

**Joseph**

## 2. The National Databank

Building on the work of our Data Poverty Lab, we have, with Virgin Media O2, developed the pioneering National Databank, a world-leading 'national food bank for connectivity data', to help hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people in communities across the UK to get connected. The National Databank provides at least 500,000 free SIMs and mobile data, distributed through the National Digital Inclusion Network, and includes data donated by Virgin Media O2, Vodafone and Three.

" Every little bit of data helps to keep me well and feel more connected to the outside world."

**Paul**


## 3. The National Device Bank

Alongside the National Databank, we are establishing a National Device Bank supporting people who can't get online because they can't afford a device of their own, and also contributing to the circular economy. Innovating at scale, we are building a national hub that can take large donations of used digital devices from organisations in any sector, recycle or refurbish these, and distribute refurbished devices to people without home internet access through our National Digital Inclusion Network. We will also partner with local community refurbishing schemes so we add value to what is already happening.

" I'm very happy that I can use my device and internet connection to learn English, and my children can learn English too. I also use it to call my mother who lives in Iran."

**Firoozeh**





We are scaling up and  
expanding our work in the  
UK to ensure everyone can  
benefit from digital

Parents-Childcare

# Our track record


Good Things Foundation has over 10 years of experience in working with partners across the globe and helping people to benefit from the digital world.



We've reached over  
**4 million people**  
worldwide  
(2010 - 2022)

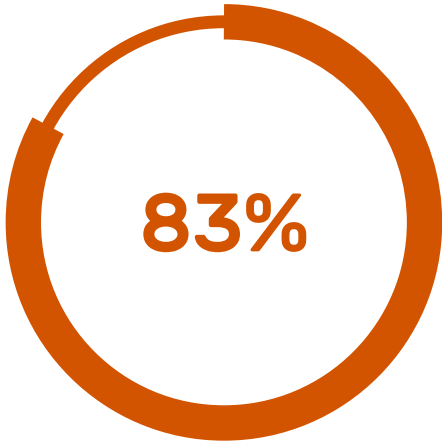


We supported over  
**22,000 people**  
with free devices,  
internet data  
and support  
(2020-22)

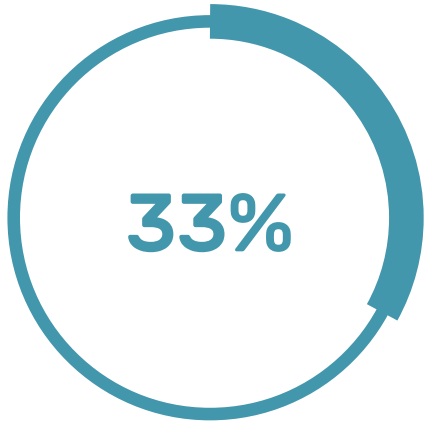


We have secured  
**500,000 mobile data SIMs**  
for the  
National Databank  
(2021 - 2023)

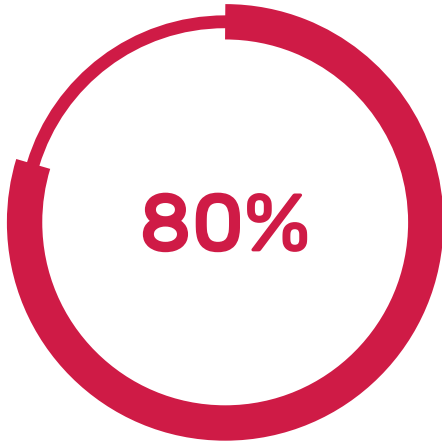
Our work drives positive outcomes for people



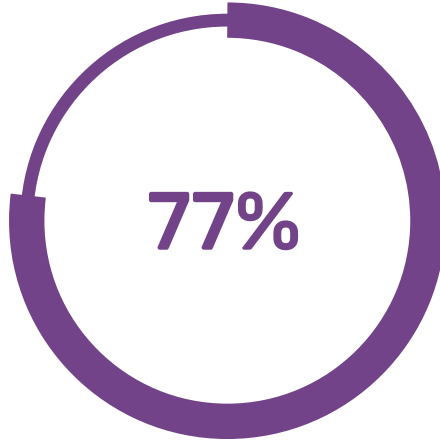
feel more confident about using online tools to manage their health<sup>7</sup>



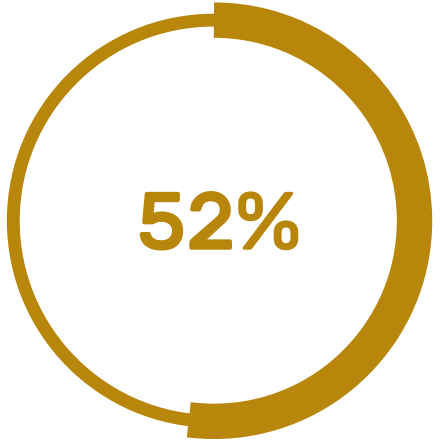
made fewer visits to their GP<sup>7</sup>



go onto employment related activities and **20% get a job<sup>8</sup>**



use online government services<sup>9</sup>



feel less lonely<sup>10</sup>



# The time is now

Now is the time to Fix The Digital Divide. We cannot wait: without further action, the UK digital divide will remain.

Figures from 2021 show that, in one year, the number of people saying 'nothing' would persuade them to go online has fallen<sup>11</sup>; and the proportion saying they would use local support to improve their digital skills has seen a sevenfold jump<sup>12</sup>. We need to seize this opportunity.

We cannot, and should not, leave millions behind, particularly at a time of global uncertainty.





We have to seize this moment  
- and we have to act

# Acting together in partnership

Our new strategy has one mission: to Fix The Digital Divide for Good. This mission is our moonshot and it will take many people and many organisations to succeed. Partnership is essential - at scale, strategic and sustained.

There are many committed and talented people and organisations working to tackle digital inclusion. But to truly fix this problem, we need to be more than the sum of our parts.

Good Things Foundation is committed to playing a leading role; we will inspire and enable community-based organisations everywhere to reach those people in greatest need and help them benefit from the digital world. But this mission cannot succeed without support across all sectors: the champions, the advocates, the conveners, the policymakers.





Together, we can fix the  
digital divide - for Good

# Support our cause, join our movement

 [www.goodthingsfoundation.org](http://www.goodthingsfoundation.org)  
 [hello@goodthingsfoundation.org](mailto:hello@goodthingsfoundation.org)



➤ If you're a local organisation or a national organisation with local venues and you'd like to be part of the National Digital Inclusion Network:

[JOIN THE NETWORK](#)

➤ If you're a business or public sector organisation and you'd like to become a Strategic Partner or you could donate used digital devices to the National Device Bank:

[EXPRESS INTEREST IN PARTNERSHIP](#)

➤ If you work in policy, and want to find out about our evidence base, Data Poverty Lab, and role in establishing a Minimum Digital Living Standard:

[CONTACT OUR RESEARCH TEAM](#)

➤ If you'd like to make a charitable donation to help us Fix The Digital Divide, or pledge to donate devices:

[DONATE](#)

# Appendix

- <sup>1</sup> UK Essential Digital Skills 2021, Lloyds Banking Group; ca. 10 million UK adults do not have the foundation-level skills as defined in the Essential Digital Skills Framework.
- <sup>2</sup> Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Report 2022, Ofcom; around 6% of UK households have no internet access. Ofcom estimates this equates to around 1.7 million households (+/- 200,000). A further 2% of adults aged 18+ had access to the internet at home but did not use it.
- <sup>3</sup> Affordability of Communications Services 2022, Ofcom; Ofcom estimates that in October 2021 around 1.1 million households (+/- 400,000) were experiencing affordability issues with their fixed broadband and 1 million (+/- 300,000) were experiencing affordability with their mobile internet.
- <sup>4</sup> UK Consumer Digital Index 2021, Lloyds Banking Group: 1.5 million more people went online during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- <sup>5</sup> Digital inclusion and older people: how have things changed in a Covid-19 world, Age UK 2021.
- <sup>6</sup> UK Essential Digital Skills 2021, Lloyds Banking Group; The number of people without all seven of the most basic 'foundation' digital skills is not improving, at 6% in 2021, compared to 8% in 2019.
- <sup>7</sup> Widening Digital Participation, Good Things Foundation survey 2019-2020
- <sup>8</sup> From 2014-2021, 1.5 million people were supported to learn Essential Digital Skills through the Future Digital Inclusion programme funded by the Department of Education, after gaining digital motivation, confidence and skills 80% went onto employment related activities and 20% get a job
- <sup>9</sup> From 2014-2021, Future Digital Inclusion programme funded by the Department of Education, after gaining digital motivation, confidence and skills 77% used online Government Services
- <sup>10</sup> Digital Lifeline report, Digital Inclusion Adults with Learning Disabilities, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport supported by Good Things Foundation, March 2022
- <sup>11</sup> UK Consumer Digital Index 2021, Lloyds Banking Group: the proportion of people saying 'nothing' would persuade them to go online fell from 48% (in 2020) to 32% (in 2021)
- <sup>12</sup> UK Consumer Digital Index 2021, Lloyds Banking Group: the proportion of people saying they would use local support (e.g. online centres, local library, digital skills charity) to improve their digital skills jumped by seven times from 5% (in 2020) to 35% (in 2021)

