Digital inclusion beyond the pandemic: call to action for a sector-wide strategy

APS Conference 2023

Laila Burton
Senior Manager, Open University

Freddie Quek
Chief Technology Officer, Times Higher Education

26th April 2023
Research into digital exclusion
Findings from studies into the impact of digital exclusion

- Over half of students experienced digital exclusion during the pandemic (OfS, 2020) and access to broadband and study spaces were the most significant issues (Barber, 2021)

- Intersectionality of poverty and race – disproportionate impact of digital exclusion on students from BAME backgrounds (Jisc, 2021)

- Digital exclusion a greater risk for people with mental illness (Spanakis et al. 2022) and it can impact on mental health (Metherell, et al, 2022)

- Care experienced students more at risk (McGhee et al, 2020)

- Long Covid and implications for widening participation (106k people <25) as more likely to impact students already disadvantaged (Dickinson, 2021)

- Cost of living crisis – Minimum Digital Living Standard is a positive step
## Impact of digital exclusion on distance learners

Analysis of data from 869 OU students responding to survey in September 2021

### Factors that negatively impact study for the following groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Struggling in studies</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>Lowest 2 IMD quintiles</th>
<th>Black / Asian</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No/poor broadband connection/speed</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others needing internet/PC at home</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No suitable device to work with</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of broadband</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No dedicated study space</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Current Students Brand Tracker survey question: Which of the below negatively affected your study during your current or last module? Base: All Current students (869) disability (244) mental health (111) bottom 2 IMD quintile (236) SPM higher risk (59) Asian (30) B&A (75) Struggling (105) women (574)
Digital exclusion beyond the pandemic
Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews with OU students facing digital exclusion

- **Loss of study spaces** – more distractions, less privacy and physical discomfort in spaces that are not designed for focussing
- **Students prioritising others** in their household impacted on their time, study space and access to devices
- **Low/no broadband connections** have a negative impact on students’ studies and some have to travel to different locations for WiFi
- Some students have old devices with **reduced functioning** and cannot afford replacements, impacting on their studies
- **Offline study materials** can benefit students experiencing digital exclusion.
- **Impact of long Covid** on some students’ studies and study intensity
- Some students working from home struggle with a **lack of delineation between work/ study spaces** – loss of motivation and screen fatigue
A joined-up response by UK tech leaders communities and associated organisations:

1) Find out what digital inclusion initiatives are out there and who are already involved
2) How tech leaders individually, their organisations or communities can get involved

24 April 2023
What is the problem?

“Digital Poverty - The inability to interact with the online world fully - when, where and how an individual needs to”

Complex Social Context

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAVE</th>
<th>V.S.</th>
<th>HAVE NOT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAN</td>
<td></td>
<td>CAN NOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILL</td>
<td></td>
<td>WILL NOT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Joining the Dots at local, regional, national & international levels

**BCS**

**Purpose**
Making IT good for society.

**Vision**
A competent and ethical profession that is diverse, inclusive and plentiful in talent at all levels and for a society that is resilient and thriving in the digital world with access to the technology, knowledge and skills required.

**Mission**
To ensure the digital journey is safe and positive for everyone, by raising standards of competence and conduct across the IT industry and tackling the ethical challenges we face along the way.

**BCS Digital Divide SG**

**Purpose**
Leave no one digitally behind.

**Vision**
An active group of informed and skilled leaders who inspire, advise and direct BCS efforts through fulfilling its goal of fixing the Digital Divide.

**Mission**
To provide leadership and technical expertise enabling BCS involvement in effecting real, lasting and permanent change that closes the Digital Divide.

**Digital Poverty Alliance**

**Purpose**
Convene, collaborate and increase sustainable capacity within the digital ecosystem.

**Vision**
To live in a world which enables everyone to access the life-changing benefits that digital brings.

**Mission**
To end digital poverty once and for all by 2030.

[Digital Poverty Alliance website]
#joiningthedots Dashboard

#joiningthedots #uktechleaders communities and partners involved in digital inclusion initiatives

**DIGITAL INCLUSION**
- **Device**
  - Action Area 1a
  - Appropriate device per person
- **Data Connectivity**
  - Action Area 1b
  - Sufficient and affordable data plans
- **Tech Support**
  - Action Area 2a
  - Technical support for supporters of beneficiaries & beneficiaries
- **Motivation & Confidence**
  - Action Area 2b
  - Support to address fear, confidence, motivation, capability
- **Digital Skills**
  - Action Area 3
  - Essential digital skills
- **Tech Career Opportunities**
  - Action Area 4
  - Career talks, apprenticeship, work placement, mentoring
- **Safety and Security**
  - Action Area 5
  - CyberSafe practices
- **Inclusive Design**
  - Action Area 6
  - Appropriate content & user experience
- **Connect & Communicate**
  - Action Area 7
  - Socialise and mobilise via network of networks
- **Research and Data**
  - Action Area 8
  - Understand landscape of digital poverty in UK

**DESIRED OUTCOME**

**SIGNPOST**
- **National DeviceBank**
  - Good Things Foundation
- **National DataBank**
  - Good Things Foundation, Nominet, Virgin Media, Vodaphone, Three UK
  - Connectivity for Third Sector
  - GoodCall Mobile
- **Digital Confidence**
  - Scottish Tech Army Sky
- **Key Stage 3 OpenTech Skills**
  - OpenUK
  - Online Centres Network (Adults)
  - Good Things Foundation
- **National Volunteer App**
  - Scottish Tech Army Digital Poverty Alliance
  - Career and Role Models in Tech (School Children)
  - Tech She Can
- **Online Safety**
  - Good Things Foundation
- **National Catalogue of Digital Personas**
  - BCS, Lloyds Bank Academy, Digital Poverty Alliance
  - National Online Classroom
  - Oak National Academy
  - Young Adults
  - YMCA, WCIT
- **Digital Youth Index**
  - Nominet

**Unknown**
- Action Area

**Planning/Discussion**
- Action Area

**Pilot/Testing**
- Action Area

**In Progress/Available**
- Action Area

Author: Freddie Quek, Founder of #JoiningTheDots, Community Board Member of Digital Poverty Alliance, Chair of BCS Digital Divide Specialist Group
## Contribution 1 to DPA National Delivery Plan

### National Tech Support Pilot

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Freddie Quek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>My Offer</strong></td>
<td>Create pilot to offer National Tech Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My Ask</strong></td>
<td>Support from DPA, BCS, Unisys, ServiceNow, #JoiningtheDots communities to scale this across UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team</strong></td>
<td>Harry Messenger, Hannah Dowdle (Unilever), Davoud Purhossein, Simone Morris, Joanna Goldsmith (Unisys), Amit Nehru, Adam Norris (ServiceNow), Leela Damodaran (Loughborough Uni)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Comment</strong></td>
<td>Pledge towards Digital Poverty Alliance’s National Delivery Plan</td>
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### Dimension Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>BCS, DPA, PTG, Unisys, ServiceNow, #JoiningtheDots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>National Tech Support/Helpdesk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>South East England, UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>Gap in providing IT helpdesk support for rest of population outside work in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Run pilot with Age Concern Southend to learn from supporting older people, then scale after</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Contribution 2 to DPA National Delivery Plan

### National Catalogue of Digital Personas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Freddie Quek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My Offer</td>
<td>Establish a national catalogue of digital personas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My Ask</td>
<td>Support from DPA, BCS, Unisys, ServiceNow, #JoiningtheDots communities to scale this across UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Elena Dumitrana (And Digital and DPA), David Smith, Richard Thurston, Nicola Kirk, Jemma Waters (Lloyds Bank and DPA), Leela Damodaran (Loughborough Uni)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment</td>
<td>Pledge 2 towards Digital Poverty Alliance’s National Delivery Plan</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who</td>
<td>BCS, DPA, Lloyds Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What</td>
<td>National Catalogue of Digital Personas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where</td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When</td>
<td>2022/2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why</td>
<td>Current digital personas do not address or reflect needs of those that are excluded – disabled, older people etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How</td>
<td>Work with everyone to create National Catalogue of Digital Personas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Contribution 3 to DPA National Delivery Plan**

**Digital Inclusion Strategy for Higher Education Sector**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who</strong></td>
<td>DPA, BCS, THE, Liverpool Uni, Leeds Uni, Loughborough Uni and others tbc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong></td>
<td>Digital Inclusion Strategy for Higher Education Sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where</strong></td>
<td>UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When</strong></td>
<td>2023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why</strong></td>
<td>Most unis have a digital inclusion strategy, but there is none across the higher education sector.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How</strong></td>
<td>Work with everyone to create Digital Inclusion Strategy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Member**  
Freddie Quek

**My Offer**  
Establish a call to action to have a higher education sector-wide Digital Inclusion Strategy

**My Ask**  
Support from Times Higher Education, DPA and higher education institutions across the UK

**Team**  
Simeon Yates (Liverpool Uni), Jeff Grabill (Leeds Uni), Leela Damodaran (Loughborough Uni), Charlotte Coles (Times Higher Education) and others tbc

**Comment**  
Pledge 3 towards Digital Poverty Alliance’s National Delivery Plan

**Initiated on**  
20 Apr
Call to Action: UK’s Higher Ed Digital Inclusion Network

Closing plenary session on 20 April at Digital Universities Week 2023 hosted by University of Leeds

Universities signed up

- The Open University
- University of Bristol
- De Montfort University
- University of Leeds
- University of Liverpool
- University of Staffordshire

Supported by

- BCS
- Digital Poverty Alliance
- #JoiningtheDots community of 13 #UKTechLeaders communities
- Times Higher Education

Get in touch and share:

1. What projects/initiatives are you currently involved in either within your institution or independently that address digital inclusion?
2. What commitment could you make to support a sector wide Digital Inclusion Network?
Thank you

If you would like to find out more or collaborate, we’d love to hear from you!

Freddie@timeshighereducation.com
linkedin.com/in/freddiequek
@FreddieQ

Laila.Burton@open.ac.uk
linkedin.com/in/lailaburton
@lailasburton