

Digital Poverty & Digital Capital

Identifying and addressing the lack of access to the digital world

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BCS & RSA

BCS Purpose

What should we do as members of the BCS?

Making IT good for society

In 2015, Paul Fletcher, BCS CEO, wrote that we should use the three pillars of Community, Excellence and Leadership to support our endeavours.

Let's not leave anyone behind.

RSA Purpose

What does the RSA do?

We're committed to a future that works for everyone.

A future where we can all participate in its creation.

Digital Poverty

Aside - Digital Irony

How do we engage with those in digital poverty?

Especially in lockdown, we are engaging more and more using digital tools.

How do we even begin to engage with those in digital poverty?

Measuring digital poverty

Is Government data too coarse for the job?

- ONS - UK Government data is too broad
- Lloyds Bank – much more depth

ONS data on internet access

Every household with children has access?!

TABLE 2: INTERNET CONNECTION BY HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION, 2012 TO 2020

	%								
	Have internet access								
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
All households	80	83	84	86	89	90	90	93	96
1 adult aged 16 to 64	76	74	81	80	87	88	91	94	95
1 adult aged 65+	36	40	40	49	53	61	59	73	80
2 adults aged 16 to 64	93	96	97	96	99	97	99	100	100
2 adults, 1 at least 65+	69	74	79	84	85	88	87	89	94
3+ adults, all ages	95	97	97	98	99	100	98	99	97
Households with children	95	97	96	97	99	98	100	100	100

Base: Households in Great Britain.

Source: Office for National Statistics



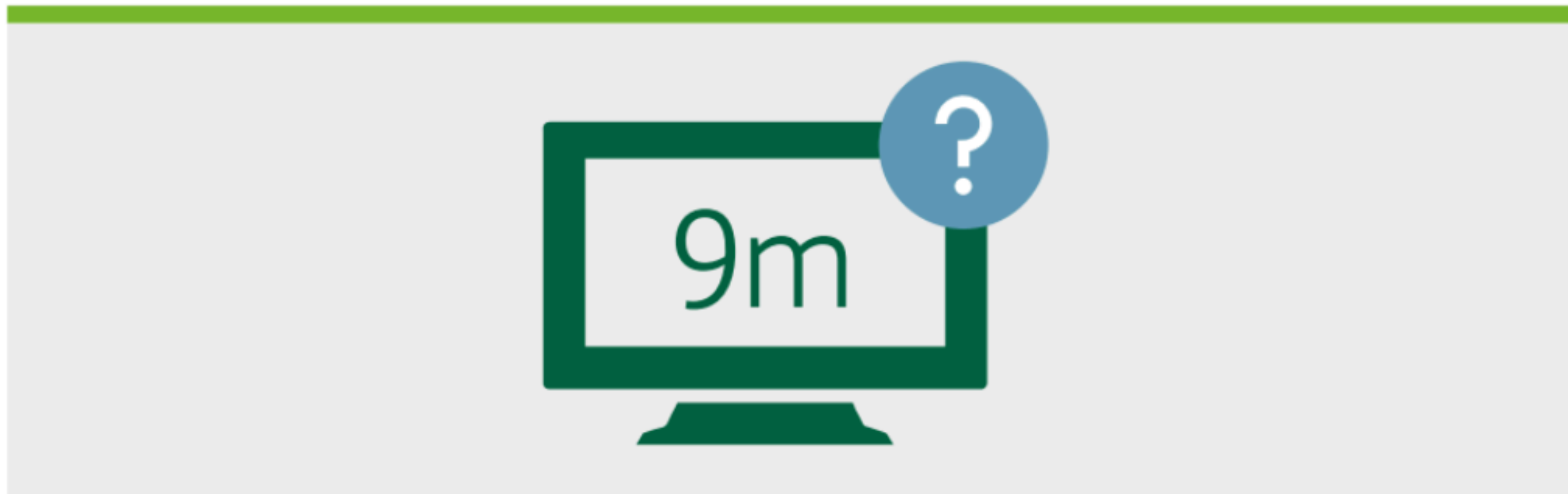
Defining digital access

Is access to the Internet enough?

- ONS - all households with children have internet access
- Lloyds Bank - “3.6 million people (7%) are almost completely offline”.
- What is the discrepancy here?

Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index

A more detailed measure of confident usage



An estimated 9 million (16%) are unable to use the Internet and their device by themselves.

Defining Digital Poverty

Is it just about access to the Internet?

“Poverty is not just a lack of money” – everyone

Similarly, **digital poverty** is not just a lack of access to the internet.

Missing pieces

What is Digital Capital?

Tease out the social characteristics that enable it

- Knowledge
- Training
- Security and confidence
- Cash
- Space and time
- Family and peer support
- Local infrastructure

Missing digital capital

Define the pieces of our lives that enable digital access

- Knowledge – lack of information
- Training – lack of properly-tailored education
- Security and confidence – complexity of existing technical solutions?
- Cash – cash poverty, expensive hardware
- Space and time – complex lifestyle issues
- Family and peer support – very complex social issues
- Local infrastructure – rural and urban causes

Three kinds of capital

Devices, bandwidth and skills

- Device poverty
- Bandwidth poverty
- Skills poverty

James Davenport

Hebron & Medlock Professor of Information Technology, University of Bath

Member of BCS Council

Case Study - Hospital Volunteers

Friends of the RUH

Volunteers in a hospital in Bath

- Ward visits - tea and coffee, and more importantly social contact
- Gardening
- Kit repair - walking frames and hearing aids

Aside - "Fear of looking stupid"

What personal barriers do people put around themselves?

Should I avoid the benefits of the internet because of perceived risk of failure?

Effects of Poverty

Many effects

The many ramifications of digital poverty

- Poor education – especially with lockdown and remote learning
- Increased financial cost – reduced access to cheap deals, cost comparison
- Poor lifestyle – reduced access to food delivery, food comparison
- Social isolation – no Zoom, no Uber, no cheap train tickets
- News isolation – no access to variety of news sources, fact checkers
- Education impact – aside from direct access to education, the crossover effect of internet access to STEM and other learnings

Health impacts

COVID-19 Track and trace

- Physical hardware
- Ability to use effectively
- Desire to use

Digital in the workplace

Employer Demand for Digital Skills

- "... help inform the development of evidence-based digital skills policy".
- “Acquiring specific digital skills makes career progression as well as a pay increase more likely.”

Unaware non-participants

Who could benefit from digital world?

"Over one-third of those offline say the Internet 'doesn't interest me' "

Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index 2020

Defining Solutions

Many existing solutions

The good work already being done

- Good Things Foundation
- Future Dot Now
- Barclays Bank Digital

Many existing solutions

The good work already being done

"We believe that digital technology can support equality of opportunity, and ensure everyone can participate fully in today's society."

Good Things Foundation

Many existing solutions

The good work already being done

"Our aim is to inspire **behavioural change** across society that could lead to a genuine cultural shift.

We are putting the focus on **lifelong learning** and developing the digital skills people require for work – helping them **identify the skills they need** and showing them where to get them."

Future Dot Now

Many existing solutions

The good work already being done

"Over 11,000 people are benefitting with devices, connectivity and support thanks to DevicesDotNow"

Devices Dot Now

Many existing solutions

The good work already being done

The story of the DevicesDotNow



- **2,419** devices allocated to **203** community partners
- Funding secured to support **7,772** further people, via **350** community partners

11,437 total devices secured

Many existing solutions

The good work already being done



We're helping 500 care homes across the UK boost their digital skills.

“By having the tablet we've been able to keep residents in contact with family members, which has helped ease the distress that lockdown and shielding caused for both family members and residents.”

The Grove Residential Care Home

Leaders and Followers

Individuals as leaders

How we can lead

"Let's take a second to remember that a lot of families in need will not have access to the internet.

"They can't sign petitions or scroll down my twitter.

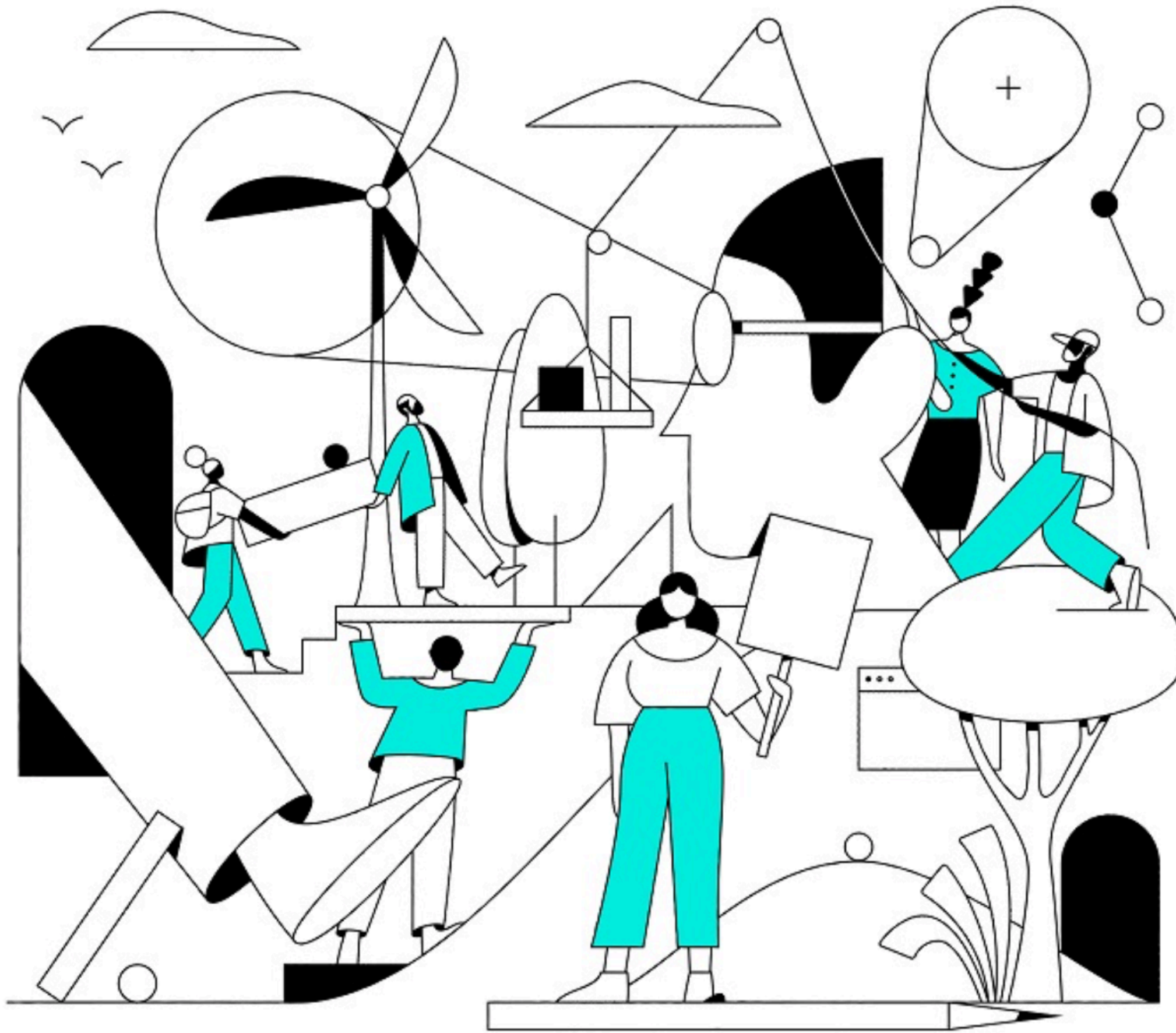
"Their voices cannot be heard so we have to use ours to communicate on all of this amazing local help.

"Thank you all"

Marcus Rashford MBE, 28 October 2020

RSA as Leader

How others can lead



**WE UNITE
PEOPLE
AND IDEAS**

Join us to resolve the challenges of
our time.

Government as follower

How other bodies can define solutions first

“When it comes to social challenges which require citizen engagement, we need intermediate institutions to find a way forward.”

RSA, "Can Government be more effective as the ‘first follower’?"

Matthew Taylor, Chief Executive, RSA

Anthony Painter, Chief Research & Impact Officer

Government as follower

How other bodies can define solutions first

“We should see [Government] as providing the final piece of the jigsaw in a process of change started by citizens: ‘first follower’ rather than erratic leader.”

RSA, same piece

Government as follower

How other bodies can define solutions first

“Who’s in the lead? We could be.”

RSA, same piece

Digital Census

Digital Census?

... or digital census?

"Census 2021 will be the first digital-first census. It's easy to do and can be done on any device."

"If you can't get online or need help completing the census online, there'll be Census Support Centres across England and Wales."

Many demographics

How demographics relate to missing capital

- Poverty in general affects demographic classifications
- Digital poverty is not a canonical input into demographics
- How do demographics and digital capital intersect?

Many more solutions

Tying demographics and missing capital together

	Knowledge	Cash	Support	Local infrastructure	Space and Time	Training
Elite	?		?	?	?	?
Established Middle Class	?	?	?	?	?	?
Technical Middle Class		?	?	?	?	?
New Affluent Workers	?		?	?		?

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What is digital poverty?

- Inability to interact with the digital world
- A lack of digital capital
- A significant social problem with a wide range of causes
- A contributor to a wide range of social problems
- An issue that we can help to address through collaboration

How can we fix Digital Poverty?

Increasing awareness and getting involved

- Be aware, and raise awareness
- New language - **digital poverty** is real, **digital capital** is real
- Align your skills and experience with others

Questions?

References

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