# Digital Inclusion Strategy

13 November 2020

# Areas covered in presentation

1. Desired Outcomes

2. The national and Local digital inclusion picture

3. The digital landscape – Covid -19 response

4. Key conclusions and observations

5. Draft Digital Inclusion Strategy, Vision and Action Plan

6. Cabinet Report Proposals

# Desired Outcomes

- Develop a Digital Inclusion Strategy and Action Plan, with city stakeholders which:
  - enables and accelerates our ability to tackle inequality by tackling inequalities in digital access & connectivity and skills
  - position the Council as a key influencer and to play a joining up role in recognition of existing partnerships and expertise
  - targets citizens, communities and businesses – with co-design and co-production at its heart

- Is aligned to the Council's outcomes, existing strategies and Covid-19 response/recovery

•Birmingham, an entrepreneurial city to learn, work and invest in
•Birmingham, an aspirational city to grow up in
•Birmingham, a fulfilling city to age well in
•Birmingham, a great city to live in
•Birmingham residents gaining the maximum benefit from hosting the Commonwealth Games; and
•Birmingham a city that takes a leading role in tackling climate change.

aspiration, tackling inequality, root causes

stimulate growth that benefits those who need it, while achieving carbon goals

reform public services so that we move from crisis to prevention

building trust & stimulating participation and engagement

underpinned by a new kind of council

# Summary of National and Local Findings

- Birmingham has seen an increase in digital inclusion activity over the last 12 months. It has moved from 88.6% to 91.4% from 2018 to 2019 compared to the national average of 89.8% (2018) to 90.8% in 2019. (ONS2020 report)

- Digital exclusion in Birmingham has improved from 11.2% in 2018 to 8.6% in 2019. This bucks the national findings digital exclusion which remains persistent despite various initiatives.

- There is a strong correlation between digital exclusion and social factors and deprivation. Given Birmingham's ranking on deprivation and a potential worsening of its economic position due to the lockdown, it is likely that the digital divide could widen and as well as deepen leading to greater digital poverty.

- There are concerns that further digitisation of Council Services without intervention could further increase the digital divide and inequalities

- Majority of digitally excluded are over 65years, - but other age groups are impacted:
  - 12% of 11 to 18 years (700,000) have no internet access at home from a computer or tablet (2018)
  - those with disabilities (23%) are four times more likely to be excluded than those without disabilities. (2018)

- COVID-19 has highlighted that the digital skills gap impacts not just individuals, but many of the organisations and communities that are part of their support circle.

# Why Intervention is so important for those excluded

- Rapid increase of online services only – shopping online, Online offers significantly cheaper in many cases
- Gateway to jobs and progression - Most job vacancies are online only – increasing inequality and loss of opportunity
- School and education courses more reliant on self-teaching platforms to supplement the classroom
- Paradigm shift to online GP and other medical consultations, access to public services
- Lockdown has led to greater isolation and mental health issues. Social media is the only outlet for many vulnerable and disadvantages citizens
- Reduced opportunities to use public spaces with increased fear and mistrust of using public spaces
- Reduced opportunities to use neighbours and friends' digital devices and connectivity
- Digital poverty creates inequalities – that impact on life chances and health and wellbeing outcomes

*Graphics from the Out of the Maze report. Credit: Megan Salole*

# What's causing digital exclusion

- Most common reasons are cited below:  Many people who are excluded will experience at least one if not all of these issues:

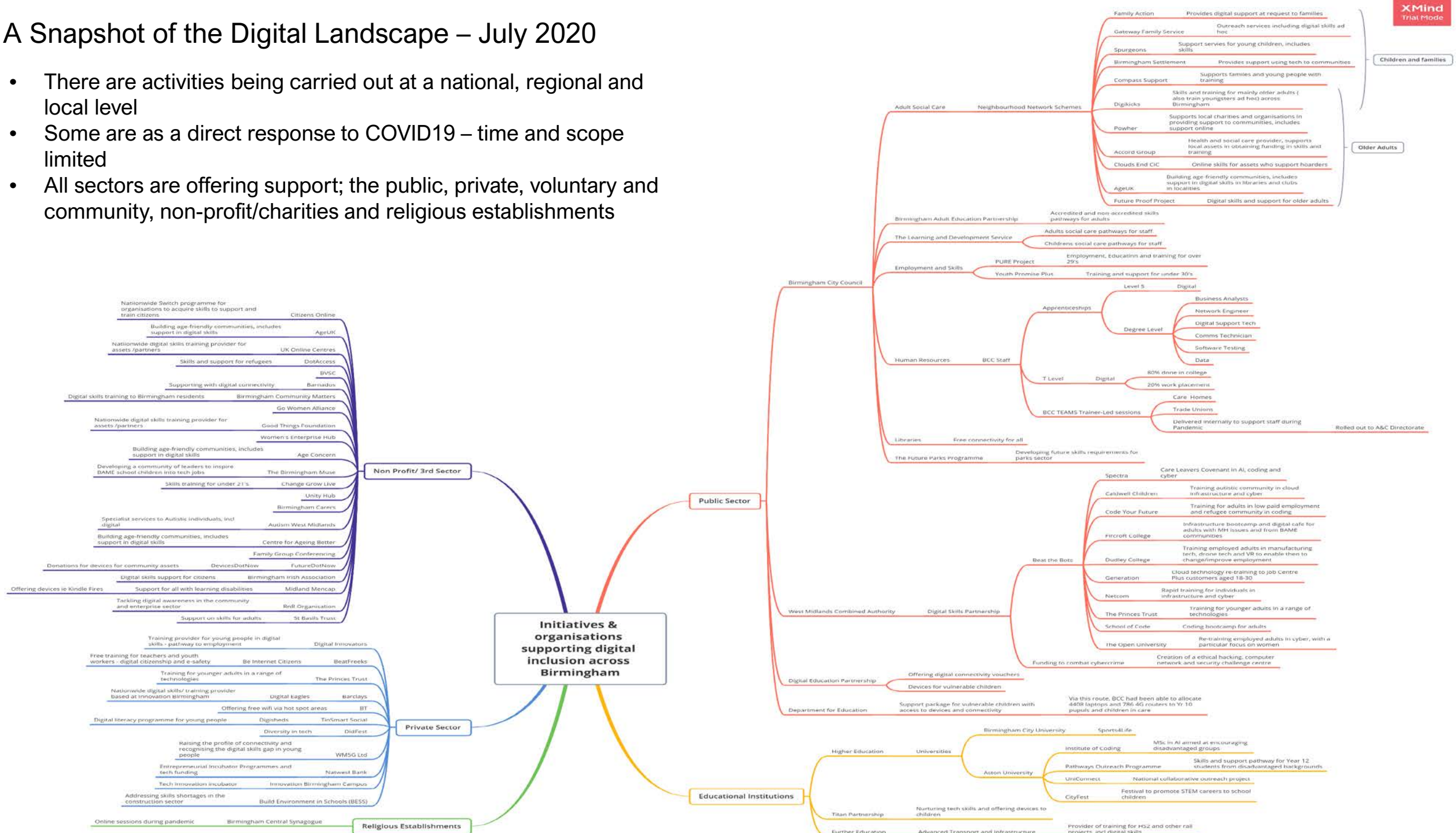
  - Affordability of devices and connectivity costs
  - The skills gap to use, or means to learn
  - A lack of internet and / or device access
  - The motivation and confidence to use, understand or engage
  - Trust and a fear of crime, or not knowing where to start to go online

- The factors impacting on digital exclusion are complex and multifaceted and there are different levels of digital exclusion

- Having connectivity in the home does not mean people are digitally included. Other factors such as  limited data packages, inappropriate devices, or limited numbers of devices to meet family needs all contribute

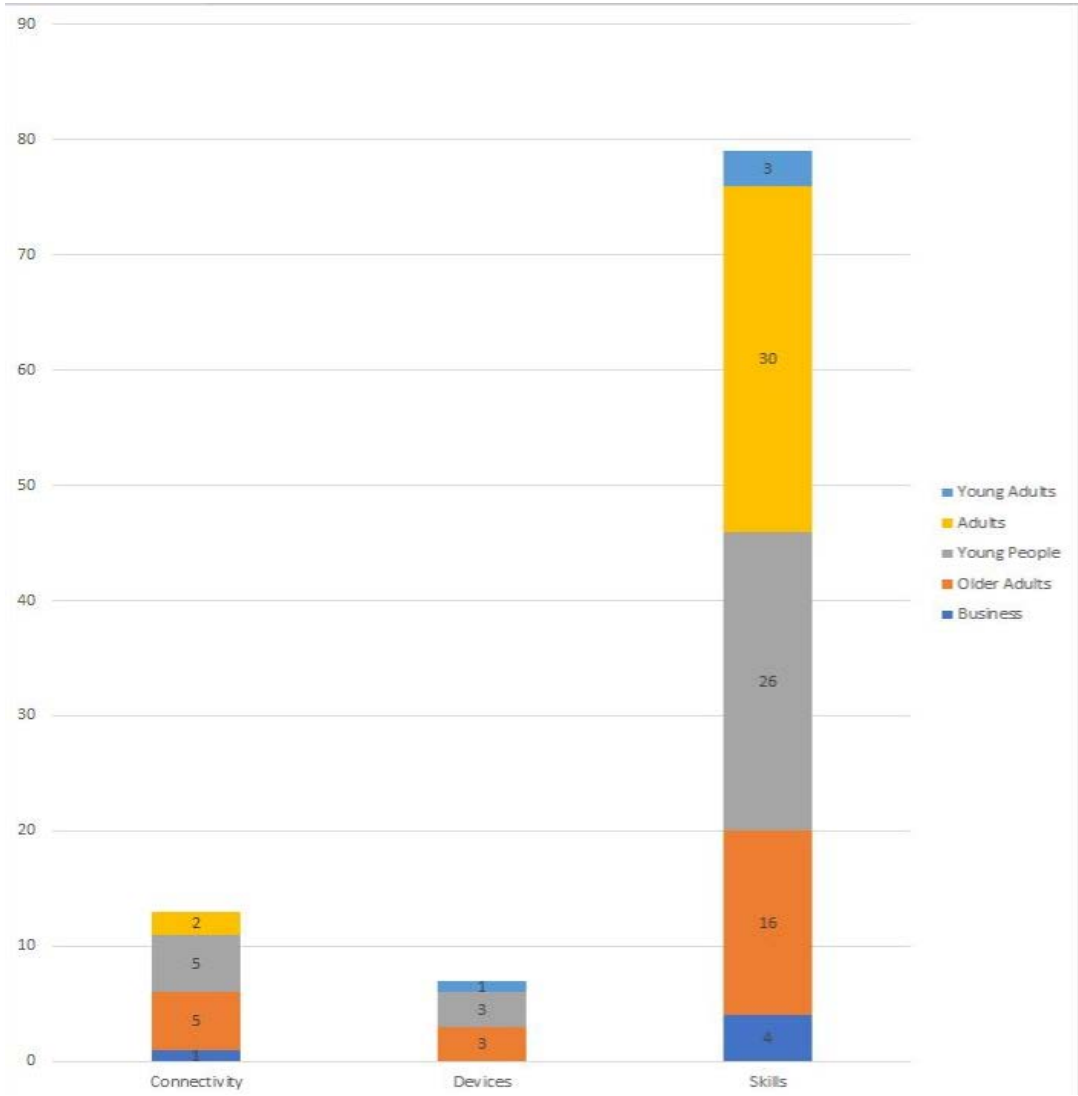
# A Snapshot of the Digital Landscape – July 2020

- There are activities being carried out at a national, regional and local level
- Some are as a direct response to COVID19 – time and scope limited
- All sectors are offering support; the public, private, voluntary and community, non-profit/charities and religious establishments



# Digital Landscape- key findings

- There is some excellent work being undertaken by city partners and organisations across the region
- It shows that most of the work being undertaken relates to mainly aspects of digital skills.
- Much of the work is uncoordinated, with a lack of visibility of  others' activities and thus missed opportunities for joint working.
- Much of the work is siloed and aimed at delivering particular outcomes.
- There does not appear to be many clear pathways nor co-ordinated handovers to ensure that people continue to develop or even use their skills.
- Affordable connectivity and lack of devices have been identified by the Neighbourhood Network Services as the most difficult issues to address,
- Services to help people go online are not joined up enough. Efforts are duplicated or mirrored across providers, and funding is sporadic and does not always align with users' needs.




Birmingham still has fewer initiatives that other areas across the UK, especially around NEETS  (FutureDotNow 2019)

# What does Good look like – A Work in Progress

Our aims and objectives for our City are:

- every citizen has easy access to an internet enabled device ideally within their own household.
- city-wide, locality based and online educational sessions, giving basic, intermediate and advanced tuition to meets specific needs and enables a person to develop their digital journey.
- Targeted interventions and effective signposting to facilitate end to end learning opportunities and ensuring citizens can maximise and build on their skills to remove the barriers of those most excluded in a sustainable way
- That citizens have a digital by choice preference by creating innovative solutions that enable citizens to access services using their device of choice.
- digital inequality no longer persists so that everyone can benefit from digital; feel empowered to improve their lives through digital.

# Two Year Draft Digital Inclusion Strategy

## *Vision*

***'A fully digital inclusive City, where everyone has the confidence, skills and capability to access the services and information they need to thrive and live their lives to their full potential in an increasing digital world.'***

## Design Principles

**PERSON-FOCUSED AND INCLUSIVE** – placing people, communities, businesses, and organisations at the heart of design and delivery, ensuring they are involved from the outset in helping to co-design targeted and bespoke solutions that meet their needs

**HOLISTIC** – focusing on activity that seeks to overcome all the challenges associated with digital exclusion and linking this agenda with other areas of work that seek to tackle other forms of social and economic exclusion

**COLLABORATIVE** – working in collaboration with partners to achieve joint outcomes, deliver coordinated and strategic activity, and maximise opportunities

**PARTNER-LED** – delivering a city vision with collective ownership and shared delivery of activity across partners, ensuring we work with and learn from those who have experience and expertise in this area as well as leveraging existing networks and assets

**EVIDENCE-LED** – working with partners to gather evidence of the local digital landscape, the barriers people face, and evidence of what works well to ensure we have a robust assessment of digital exclusion at a local level and can utilise this insight to identify interventions that will have the most impact

# Initial Outline Action Plan - To be co-designed, agreed and jointly delivered with city partners and stakeholders

| STRATEGIC THEME | ACTIVITY/ACTION | TIMESCALES |
|---|---|---|
| **GOVERNANCE**<br>Establish a Governance framework for delivery | •Establish the right level of governance to oversee the development, design and delivery of the action plan<br>•Establish greater alignment with the West Midlands Digital Skills Partnership<br>•Create greater social value for our citizens through our work with commercial and industry partners and organisations | Short Term |
| **SCOPING AND SIZING**<br>Understanding the extent of the problems and targeting resources accordingly | •Gather the necessary evidence and information to develop a richer understanding of the digital landscape and the extent of digital exclusion at a local level.<br>•Work with partners to understand which individuals, communities, and organisations are most at risk, the specific barriers they face, and assessing their specific needs, e.g. Asylum seekers, refugees, those with disabilities | Short Term |
| **INCLUSIVITY**<br>Influencing Policy & strategy development Ensure digital is built into all policies & strategies | •The Council will consider the impact of digital exclusion when developing future strategies and policies to ensure our processes do not increase or deepen the digital divide<br>•Work with public sector partners, DWP, NHS, WM Police, Housing Associations to influence their strategies and Policies to ensure digital inclusion is embedded | Medium /Long Term |
| **BUILDING CAPACITY**<br><br>Enhance community capacity | •Establish a two-year funded team that;<br>•identifies what is being provided across the city to facilitate better coordinated support, remove duplication and spend money wisely.<br>•enables better coordination and alignment between the city partners to enhance joint working opportunities<br>•co-ordinates activity city wide to reduce fragmentation and ensure that investment is maximised and resulting in the best outcomes<br>•identifies, shapes and influences emerging strategies and policies with partners to support the delivery of the city vision<br>•works with city partners to explore the development of a digital champions framework embedded within the communities to ensure that those that are hardest to reach are included<br>•works with the communities and organisations to develop and deliver the action plan | Short Term |
| **CONNECTIVITY**<br><br>Maximising our assets to accelerate internet accessibility | •Work with the community libraries, local businesses and other public sector orgs to establish a city-wide computer loans service with connectivity<br>•Work with our Planning and Infrastructure teams to explore new models for securing internet connectivity within our social housing sector<br>•Work with partners to map out places/spaces with free Wi-Fi to identify accessibility<br>•Establish areas of "notspots" across the City and work with telecommunication providers to bridge the gap<br>•Work with Housing Associations and Registered Social Landlords to establish ways of providing access to Wi-Fi in communal areas<br>•Work with our Care homes to explore ways to enable the residents to have access to free internet services<br>•Ensure our libraries and Community centres provide access to computer devices and free internet services<br>•Work with other community-based organisations, e.g. religious Institutions to explore ways to increase places and spaces for online access and digital skills development<br>•Explore opportunities to establish a city-wide digital connectivity and data with telecommunication provider<br>•Working with City partners to develop a city-wide digital equipment recycling service to increase the availability of computer devices for the Community and citizens | Short Term<br><br>Medium / Long Term |
| **BUILDING CAPABILITY**<br><br>Maximise and promote the use of existing communities and organisations that deliver digital skills to build confidence and Trust | •Identify existing and emerging digital skills provision across the City<br>•Utilise Birmingham Adult Education Service offering of free basic digital skills<br>•Build on existing Funded Programme such as PURE and Youth Promise<br>•Build on and promote digital inclusion activities being delivered by the Neighbourhood Networks Service and their assets<br>•Promote digital skills offering by major corporates, such as Amazon, Microsoft and LinkedIn, Barclays Eagles etc.<br>•Explore opportunities for partnering with tech companies<br>•Work closely with the WM Digital Skills Partnership and GBSLEP to identify new and emerging training and development opportunities | Medium Term |
| **FUNDING**<br>Maximising funding streams for better alignment of outcomes | •Identify funding streams, such a govt grants, Big Lottery<br>•Establish potential consortia to develop joint bids for targeted interventions, such as infrastructure, connectivity or skills development | Medium Term |

# Establishing the City-wide Digital Inclusion strategy and joint Action Plan;

- Feedback from stakeholders, Council's approach is a good starting point, but to get real buy in, the Strategy and Action Plan need to be co-designed and jointly owned

- The Action Plan should be co-deliverable with city partners taking on responsibility, bringing in resources, capability and capacity

- Other City partners are trying to address similar issues and achieve better outcomes for those they work with, the Strategy provides the platform and opportunities to align outcomes and potentially resources

# Commitments from Partners for joint working

- ***DWP recognise the negative impact digital exclusion can have on citizens and communities by creating further inequalities and accessibility to vital services as we move into a more digital World. We are committed to working in partnership with Birmingham City Council and other organisations to have a co-ordinated approach to narrowing the digital divide and improving skills and employment prospects for the citizens of Birmingham'.***

- ***WMCA Digital Skills Partnership is actively working to improve the digital skills training that is available to all residents and business across the region. We recognise that this can only be achieved through meaningful partnership work and collaboration and are committed to working with Birmingham City Council to achieve improved prospects both social and economic for residents'***