

Grwp yr Economi, Sgiliau a Chyfoeth Naturiol
Economy, Skills and Natural Resources Group



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Nick Ramsay AM
Public Accounts Committee

30 November 2016

Dear Mr Ramsay

Further to the Committee meeting on 14 November, I am writing with additional information in relation to digital skills.

We have a broad range of initiatives for raising awareness and increasing digital skills, including Superfast Broadband Communications and Marketing, Superfast Business Broadband Exploitation project, Digital Inclusion, Digital Communities Wales, Digital Literacy, Digital Competence Framework (DCF), Learning in Digital Wales and Skills Gateway.

In terms of Superfast Broadband, we have a new £1.5 million marketing and communications campaign for 2016-19. In October we began a public service campaign to promote the use of broadband, show how it can help improve the lives of people and encourage take-up of superfast broadband. It consists of marketing, advertising, events, media, website and social media activity. Although the activity has national reach it is delivered on a local basis. Activity will be delivered in every local authority area in Wales until December 2017. We are also working closely with local authorities to provide them with a toolkit to promote the use of superfast broadband.

The Superfast Business Exploitation is a £12.5 million programme to ensure businesses across Wales, including the Valley regions, maximise the benefits of superfast broadband. The programme is funded by the Welsh Government, local authorities and the European Regional Development Fund to support primarily small and medium sized businesses to understand, adopt and exploit the superfast infrastructure.

Through our Digital Inclusion programme, Digital Communities Wales, and the many other actions set out in our Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan, we are continuing to support more people to benefit from the latest digital technologies such as the internet. The Digital Inclusion Framework and Delivery Plan, published in March 2016, can be accessed through the following link: <http://gov.wales/topics/science-and-technology/digital/digital-inclusion/?lang=en>.

Digital Communities Wales (DCW) is our dedicated digital inclusion programme which is delivered by the Wales Co-operative Centre. DCW provides support to organisations which work with those individuals most likely to be digitally excluded (disabled people, those living in social housing, older people and the economically inactive and unemployed) to help them improve their lives, whether it is accessing cheaper online goods and services, helping reduce isolation or finding work. DCW works closely with public libraries and through programmes like Communities First, Communities for Work and LIFT to mitigate some of the adverse impacts of the digital elements of welfare reforms by helping give people the basic digital skills to meet online claiming requirements, including job searches. It is also working with local authorities and health boards to support greater take up of digital services. Good progress has been made against programme targets to date, with 557 organisations supported and an estimated 52,000 individuals engaged with technology. Its Wales wide training programme has so far trained 1,114 Front Line Staff and 435 volunteers.

Relevant and up to date digital literacy skills are becoming increasingly essential for future employability. Learners undertaking Welsh Government funded training provision are required to undertake an initial assessment of their essential skills, including Digital Literacy via the Wales Essential Skills Toolkit. If a need is identified then the training provider will ensure there is suitable provision in place to support the individual to develop their digital literacy so that they can apply these vital skills to a range of situations whilst at work, in learning and throughout life.

The Digital Competence Framework (DCF) seeks to embed digital skills and knowledge in everything pupils do as they progress through school and teachers will increasingly apply relevant digital skills in their lessons. The DCF was made available on 1 September together with a suite of supporting material, in advance of the new curriculum to give schools and settings the time to familiarise themselves with the Framework and to plan for its adoption. Details on DCF can be access through the following link:
<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/browse-all/digital-competence-framework/?lang=en>.

Learning in Digital Wales (LiDW) is the Welsh Government programme for improving the use of digital technology for teaching and learning in schools. The programme provides stakeholders across Wales with consistent access to a range of digital tools and resources that can support and assist the transformation of digital classroom practices. The LiDW programme encompasses multiple strands of work including Hwb, Hwb Zones and Hwb DCF Confidence Rating tool.

The Hwb platform, hosts a national collection of digital tools and resources to support learning and teaching for learners in Wales. It enables learners and teachers to access online resources anywhere, at any time and from a range of web-enabled devices. It also provides tools to help teachers create and share their own resources and assignments. We currently have over 66 per cent of schools across Wales 'actively engaged' in using the Hwb platform.

Hwb Zones allow for the underlying Hwb technology to create areas or 'zones' dedicated to a particular subject area, project or programme. Additionally, Hwb technology is able to support Welsh Government initiatives such as the award winning Creative Learning Zone and Academi Wales. The Creative Learning Zone has been developed to spotlight resources, news and events provided by arts, culture and heritage organisations.

The online confidence rating tool, developed on Hwb to support individuals and schools in self-assessing their confidence in delivering the DCF, allows teachers to self-assess their

confidence in implementing the framework and gives them a dashboard that tracks their growing confidence over time. It is anticipated that the tool will also be used to support practitioners in identifying relevant areas for their own professional development and we are currently working on enhancements to determine how information from the tool can be used to further support classroom practitioners.

The Skills Gateway is a single point of access for all unemployed individuals aged 18+ seeking employability and skills support in Wales, delivered by Careers Wales. The service includes open access and the free use of ICT facilities within a number of the 38 outreach centres located across Wales. Advisers can offer support where clients have limited digital literacy skills, enabling the client to access useful online tools and resources they may not have access to at home, or feel confident in using them by themselves, such as job searches. A new website feature, Employment Routes, has recently been launched which serves to assist individuals identify what support is on offer and available to them. The online tool asks a series of questions, the results from which are used as part of a filtering mechanism to identify those programmes and progression routes an individual could access, based on their current circumstances. Since the launch in January 2015 over 25,000 individuals have been supported and service access rates continue to rise on a monthly basis.

Yours sincerely

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