



# Digital Inclusion Policy 2022-2024

October 2022

**Basildon Borough Council**

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This Policy has related documents:	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>  <a href="http://www.basildon.gov.uk/Digital-Inclusion-Strategy">www.basildon.gov.uk/Digital-Inclusion-Strategy</a>
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## 0. Foreword



Councillor Terri Sargant (Digital Inclusion Lead)

The Council's digital inclusion policy has been refreshed in line with the Council's current Corporate Plan, due to its importance in terms of the strategic themes and the deliverables of the corporate plan. As well as its potential impact on the lives of our residents and the prosperity of the businesses located within the borough. The policy now represents a more informed and collaborative approach towards tackling the issue of being digitally isolated, still faced by millions of people in the UK. The Council now has a better understand of the scale of the issue and what are its priorities in regards of how to best ensure that no one is left behind. The policy will strengthen and focus of the Council's resources to build upon the progress the Council has made to date, to help ensure critical elements of our response to the issue are in place to enable the Council and its partners to provide a personalised and scalable response to the individual needs faced by those who are living and working in the borough that are digitally isolated. People who are unable to access the identified benefits of being able to participate and contribute in the digital world. The policy and its associated strategy demonstrates the Council's commitment to ensuring equality for all, though empowering you to prosper from the associated opportunities as per your individual needs and interests.

## 1. Introduction

Basildon Borough Council is committed to ensuring that all its residents and businesses can understand, participate in, and contribute to the digital world. The Council recognises that it must take initiative to tackle the issue of digital isolation in the borough, with the aim to achieve digital equality and to fully realise the benefits that digital inclusion can have on people's wellbeing and prosperity. Through the Council highlighting and providing residents with opportunities to benefit from the digital world, it is hoped that we can stimulate the growth of a local digital economy for the long-term prosperity of the borough. A Digital Inclusion Policy, delivered through a robust implementation strategy, will enable the Council to continue its work on establishing the full extent of the identified challenges faced by residents, and take tangible steps to ensure no resident or business is left behind.

## 2. Policy Statement

Basildon Council aims to enrich the lives of its residents and communities while supporting local businesses through removing barriers to the digital world. The benefits of digital technology for residents, can result in the reduction of the cost of living, time saved, increased employability and greater opportunity for all to live independent and more productive lives to improve their wellbeing and prosperity. Local businesses will also prosper from having a presence online and access to the fastest connection at affordable an affordable cost.

## 3. What is Digital Inclusion?

In the first Digital Inclusion Strategy set out by the Government,<sup>1</sup> digital inclusion was defined as making sure that people have the capability to use the internet or digital devices to do the things that will benefit them day to day. Digital inclusion is often defined through three key themes:

- Digital skills – people being able to use digital devices
- Connectivity - people's access to the internet and the right infrastructure.
- Accessibility - services should be designed to meet all users' needs, including those dependent on assistive technology to access digital services.

Each of these definitions addresses a single specific barrier that some, but not all, people, and organisations face. There is seldom just one reason why people are digitally excluded, and there is no single approach to solving it.

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<sup>1</sup> Cabinet Office and Government Digital Service, 2014. *Government Digital Inclusion Strategy*.

## 4. Context

### 4.1 National Context

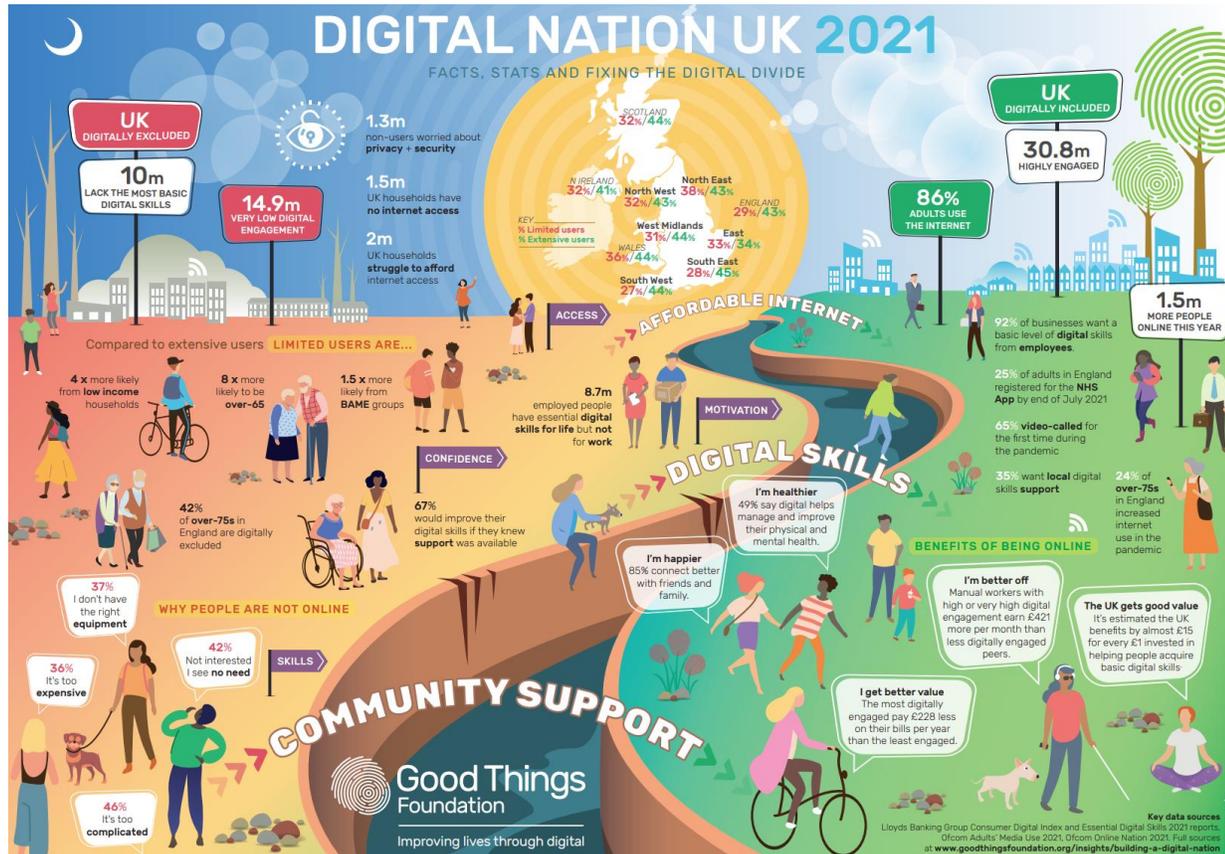


Figure 1 The Good Things Foundation 2021 Infographic. This gathers together the facts and stats about digital inclusion and exclusion in the UK. It uses new analysis of the latest Ofcom data by Prof. Simeon Yates alongside key sources such as Lloyds Bank UK Consumer Digital Index and Essential Digital Skills 2021, external research, and our own data insights.

Digital inclusion is a key objective for the Government, as referenced most recently in the 2022 Digital Inclusion Strategy<sup>2</sup> and the Levelling Up White Paper.<sup>3</sup> In both, good access to the internet is outlined as a priority as superfast broadband coverage is currently at 97%, gigabit-capable broadband at 67% and 4G at 92% coverage.<sup>4</sup> Accessibility is an important complement to digital skills to enable everyone to have the ability and opportunity to access UK Government services online. Cyber resilience and general confidence to engage in online activity is also a crucial element of ensuring greater levels of digital inclusion. Henceforth, the UK Government has invested £114m million to support the National Cyber Programme and has supported over 120 councils at the local level to support digital security. In conjunction with efforts in the private and

<sup>2</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2022. *UK Digital Strategy*. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-digital-strategy/uk-digital-strategy>>

<sup>3</sup> Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2022. *Levelling Up the United Kingdom*. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/levelling-up-the-united-kingdom>>

<sup>4</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2022. *UK Digital Strategy*. <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uks-digital-strategy/uk-digital-strategy>>

third sector, the Government also aims to support the continued increase of online interactions people have with the UK Government.

Digital skills are also set to play a role throughout the levelling up agenda as the digital sector contributed nearly £151 billion to the economy in 2019,<sup>5</sup> with approximately 1.7 million jobs filled in the digital sector in 2020, a 31.5% increase since 2011.<sup>6</sup> The Government has also created the new Digital Skills Council that brings together business and government to make sure digital skills are being enhanced. Digital skills are also a key indicator of affluence and social mobility as in 2020 people from more advantaged backgrounds held the largest share of jobs in the digital sector (57.0%), which was larger than the UK average.<sup>7</sup> People from less advantaged backgrounds and unknown backgrounds held 23.4% and 19.6% of the sector's filled jobs, respectively. Upward social mobility, defined as the proportion of those in higher class occupations from less advantaged backgrounds, is lower in the digital sector (22.8%) compared to the UK overall (26.5%).<sup>8</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic led to an acceleration in the adoption and application of digital technology which has been transformative for both people and businesses. The Good Things Foundation reported that although digital exclusion has reduced overall, the digital divide has worsened, with the most vulnerable further behind. This is because of a significant increase in the number of people that only had partial digital skills during the pandemic, however evidence suggests that isolation and lack of consistent support meant some, particularly those over sixty-five, lost or forgot previously gained skills. It is estimated that 10.6 million people are without the basic level of digital skills and 1.5 million households have no access at all to the internet. In addition, there are two million households that struggle to afford internet access in the UK today. As the pandemic exposed and exacerbated digital exclusion, this can only be expected to worsen with the increased cost of the living.<sup>9</sup>

In 2012, the Government's Digital Efficiency report estimated that between £1.7 billion and £1.8 billion could be realised as total annual savings from the increased digitisation

<sup>5</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2020. *DCMS Economic Estimates 2019: Gross Value Added*.

<sup>6</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2021. *DCMS Sector National Economic Estimates: 2011 to 2020*.

<sup>7</sup> Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2021. *DCMS Sector National Economic Estimates: 2011 to 2020*.

<sup>8</sup> [Ibid.](#)

<sup>9</sup> Cebr, 2022. *The economic impact of digital inclusion in the UK*. [online] London: Good Things Foundation and Capita. Available at: <<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/the-economic-impact-of-digital-inclusion-in-the-uk/>> [Accessed 10 October 2022].

of services. Adults in the 35-44 age group had the highest level of interaction with public authorities or services with just under half (48%) submitting official forms, 52% obtaining information from websites, and 37% downloading official forms. In contrast, adults in the 65+ and 16-24 age groups had much lower levels of interaction with Government websites. This suggests those in the over sixty-five age group either have less need to interact with the Government's websites or that they continue to suffer from the digital divide, as they are not fully exploiting the potential to use e-government as much as those in other age groups. Increasing the digital skills of those in the over sixty-fives can help to rectify this gap and the Government continues to recognise the need to address this divergence.<sup>10</sup>

To support local governments increasing digitisation and support the Government's ambitions, the Local Government Association (LGA) has created the Digital Inclusion Network. The LGA believes that with the right funding and opportunity to work in partnership with government, councils could play a far greater role targeting communities most in need, driving demand stimulation and providing digital upskilling to support the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage to the whole country by 2030 building on previous commitments to increase 4G coverage by 95 per cent, and rollout gigabit-capable broadband to at least 85 per cent of the country by 2025.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.2 Local Context

The Council recognises the importance of ensuring that it can respond to any identified deficiencies within the borough, particularly concerning the digital isolation of both residents and businesses. Henceforth, the Council is committed to ensuring its residents and businesses are aware and can capitalise on the identified opportunities through promoting further inclusion.

The Council is aware of issues concerning residents being digitally isolated for a variety of reasons through previous work with local third sector organisations and consultation with residents. Though more is to be done to understand the scale of the issue and the Council's customers exact short- and long-term needs.

In 2020, Basildon Council conducted a survey with activity centre members and sheltered scheme residents in the borough (1,041 respondents). Overall, the findings concluded that there were more negative comments made by participants in relation to technology, with a number of responses from those currently digitally excluded who declared that they saw no need for access (30%). The survey also found that 36% of

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> 2022. *Levelling Up White Paper: LGA briefing*. [online] Local Government Association. Available at: <<https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/levelling-white-paper-lga-briefing>> [Accessed 10 October 2022].

sheltered scheme residents did not have access to their own digital device. However, those that were digitally enabled highlighted a need for digital upskilling, particularly in relation to banking, shopping, and video calling. The survey highlighted the need for the delivery of the targeted outcomes, as not all customers of the Council have access to their own digital device. As well as the need to better promote the benefits and opportunities for residents to learn new digital skills to improve their confidence in specific areas.

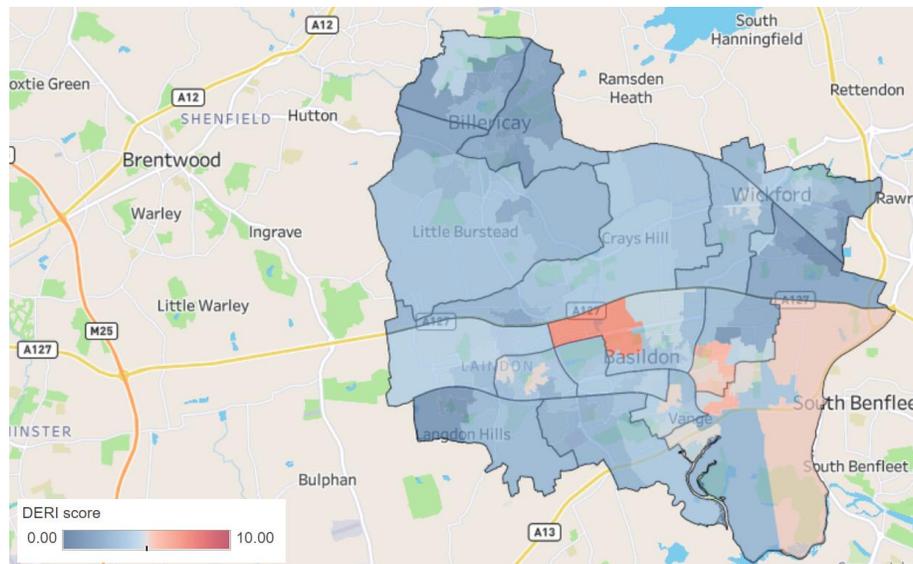


Figure 2: Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI) in the Basildon borough as of 2022

According to the Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI), which looks at what is known of the demographic profile for each ward as well as the broadband network availability and the scale of deprivation within the area to establish the level of risk. Specific wards within the borough are at an elevated risk of being digitally excluded, which must be considered in the Council's response to the issue. The analysis indicates that there is a clear link to the potential of being digitally isolated and living in an area of high deprivation, as Basildon was ranked 111 of 317<sup>12</sup>, nationally for deprivation and is the fifth most deprived borough in the East of England.

The Council's Corporate Plan 2022-2026 sets out how the Council will respond to the Government's Levelling Up White Paper objectives (*Missions*) that are to be delivered by 2030 to reduce inequalities. There are clear links to areas of focus outlined within the Levelling Up White Paper which are a focus of the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and the requirement for the Council to produce a Digital Inclusion Policy, and to deliver the Council's targeted outcomes set out within this policy, specifically these are:

<sup>12</sup><https://www.basildon.gov.uk/BasildonBoroughProfile>

### *Missions – (Focus Area)*

- **Digital Connectivity:** Boost productivity, pay jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in these places that are lagging.
- **Skills:** Spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest.

### **4.3 Benefits of Digital Inclusion**

Councils are aware of the potential of digital and are already exploiting it, by enhancing digital skills, accessibility and connectivity, councils and residents can reap social and economic benefits. This combined with the environmental impact of recycling digital devices and improving the speed of the connectivity, will have on the running costs of public amenities means that every council needs to acknowledge and act, where appropriate, to tackle the issue. Beyond the recognised social value and the economic benefits of assisting residents, there is an incentive for the Council to provide opportunities for our customers to have the capability and means to access services online.

The economic savings for the Council and its customers which could be realised through providing accessibility to the digital world are significant. Ever since technology became widely and publicly available, and from the very beginning of e-government, significant efforts have gone into reducing the processing costs of managing customer contact in the so-called 'front office', where the public first make contact with a council. For the Council's residents and local businesses, through having the access to a connection and a digital device, and the capability and motivation to gain new digital skills, people can expect to receive the following social and economic benefits:

- Likely **increase their earnings** (earning between 3% and 10% more).
- Have a **greater chance of securing employment**.
- Have the skills and access to shop online means they will receive on average a **13% discount on your bills**.
- **Improved well-being**. Being able to communicate with friends and family and the community we live in is key to our well-being. Having the access and the skill to do so results in this activity happening more frequently (14% more communication on average for those that have the access and skill to communicate online).
- **Recover some of their precious time**, through having the required skills and confidence to safely access services online (this is estimated at 30 minutes per transaction).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Cebr, 2022. *The economic impact of digital inclusion in the UK*. [online] London: Good Things Foundation and Capita. Available at: <<https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/insights/the-economic-impact-of-digital-inclusion-in-the-uk/>> [Accessed 10 October 2022].

In terms of improving people's well-being there is also the benefit to individuals' health through accessing essential information (to improve their self-care) and through greater access to medical services. Having the required digital skills also allows people to utilize the benefits of technology used for assistive living which allows people who wish to, to live more independent lives. These benefits not only improve the individual's prosperity but that of the borough. As there are economic benefits for local businesses and opportunities to reduce the cost of supporting residents and communities, making more funds available for the maintenance and development of the infrastructure within the borough to create greater opportunity.

### **3.4 'Opportunities for all, as no one is to be left behind'**

In the information age, those who are not able to engage in the digital world are at risk of being left behind. There remains an inequality in relation to enabling access to technology meaning those that are excluded do not have equal access to the recognised opportunities. Basildon Council is collaborating with its partners to reduce these inequalities and this Policy outlines the Council's key areas of focus to work towards the delivery of targeted outcomes.

The Council's approach to tackling the issue of digital isolation requires acknowledgment of specific key facets of the issue which are of equal importance. Digital exclusion can be described as multi-faceted, personal, and situational. Though to tackle an individual's issue the following elements are fundamentally needed to ensure accessibility for all:

**Connectivity:**

*People need access to an affordable / appropriate connection.*

**Digital Skills:**

*People need the confidence in their abilities through having the essential digital skills to ensure their safety when using technology.*

**Access to technology:**

*People need to understand the capabilities of modern technology and have access to suitable equipment, as per their individual needs.*

It is these three **themes** that are an essential priority of the Council's targeted outcomes.

## **5. Inclusion and Diversity**

Through the delivery of the outcomes and their priorities set out within this Policy, the Council will look to the reduce the inequalities of those that are digitally isolated. Through providing

the opportunities for everyone to access the identified benefits it is envisaged that this Policy and the associated Strategy will have a positive impact in terms of insuring inclusion, for all.

## 5 Corporate Knowledge

Corporate Ambitions	Levels of Impact			
	High	Medium	Low	None
We want Basildon to be home to healthy and active local communities able to support themselves and each other.		✓		
We want Basildon to offer a high quality of life for all residents through attractive, liveable, accessible, and safe neighbourhoods and towns along with the provision of enduring facilities, green spaces and town centres that meet the needs of the community.		✓		
We want Basildon to have a thriving, dynamic and diverse economy where all our communities benefit from increased opportunity and our workforce has the right skills for our local economy and beyond.	✓			

### 5.1 Outcome and Priorities Summary

Outcome	Priorities
Improved connectivity through removing barriers and encouraging greater investment	Priority 1 Create greater competition by removing barriers through policy development, to secure funding by all the leading operators / Internet Service Providers (ISP's) to invest in the borough's communications network infrastructure, to reduce the cost of connection to the World Wide Web for those living and working within the Borough.

<p>within the borough. (Theme/s: Connectivity)</p>	<p>Priority 2 Provide temporary solutions to remove any financial barriers where there is an identified specific need to allow residents, to connect to digital platforms and services for free.</p> <p>Priority 3 Secure an ultra-broadband connection for all new properties built within the Borough and target the delivery of an ultra-broadband connection being available across a majority of the borough (&gt;50%, <a href="#">Broadband Coverage and Speed Test Statistics for Basildon (thinkbroadband.com)</a>) by 2024.</p> <p>Priority 4 Target the delivery of 5G coverage within the borough being available from all leading mobile phone operators by 2030.</p> <p>Priority 5 Fully utilize the Local Full Fibre Network (LFFN) which connects Council owned public buildings to look to improve connectivity within the borough.</p>
<p>Residents have greater access to digital devices through removal of financial barriers. (Theme/s: Accessibility to technology)</p>	<p>Priority 1 Provide all the borough's residents free temporary access to a connected digital device. Providing access for individuals to access to the identified benefits, and to ensure a better understanding of the potential impact of participating and contributing to the digital world could have on their day to day lives.</p> <p>Priority 2 Identify and promote national and local opportunities provided by third sector organisations to allow the Council's customers to access technology relevant to their individual needs.</p> <p>Priority 3 Foster and promote opportunities to upcycle technology.</p>

<p>Ensure all residents can benefit from the opportunities of existing and emerging technology through providing a greater understanding of the benefits of modern technology. <i>(Theme/s: Digital Skills, Access to technology)</i></p>	<p>Priority 1</p> <p>Priority 2</p> <p>Priority 3</p>	<p>Promote / demonstrate assistive living technology that supports independent living to improve residents' well-being.</p> <p>Publish case studies of how the Council and its partners are using modern technology to improve the lives of its customers to create a greater understanding of its capabilities and awareness of the recognised benefits.</p> <p>Foster the development of 'smart cities', technology (IoT) to be deployed within the borough, by securing outside investment. To help improve the environment, transportation and the efficiency and effectiveness of public services and amenities within the borough.</p>
<p>Improved digital skills across the borough through providing greater opportunities to acquire new skills at home and in the workplace. <i>(Theme/s: Digital Skills)</i></p>	<p>Priority 1</p> <p>Priority 2</p> <p>Priority 3</p> <p>Priority 4</p>	<p>Ensure all those that wish to participate have what are recognised as the essential digital skills (<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essential-digital-skills-framework</a>) to navigate, participate and contribute to the digital world safely and effectively.</p> <p>Provide essential support based on an individual's needs to ensure greater confidence through removing complexity, why rewarding progress to improve levels of participation.</p> <p>Promote relevant opportunities based on individuals needs to gain new digital skills from third sector organisations and local educational institutions for free.</p> <p>Promote more advanced digital skills as per people's / businesses current requirements and their future needs, to encourage growth of a digital economy within the borough to strengthen the local economy.</p>
<p>The identified benefits of digital technology</p>	<p>Priority 1</p>	<p>Promote / demonstrate the tools available to ensure accessibility for all, specifically those wishing to participate that recognise themselves as disabled.</p>

<p>will be accessible by all with no resident being excluded.  <i>(Theme/s: Digital Skills, Connectivity, Accessibility to technology)</i></p>	Priority 2	Inform and instruct Council policy and strategy development, to recognise / support the delivery of the targeted outcomes of this policy.
	Priority 3	Create effective / ethical partnerships to support the delivery of the outcomes of this policy, to ensure a greater impact and better collaboration in terms of tackling the issue of digital isolation.
	Priority 4	Continuously promote the benefits of the digital world to motivate all those that will benefit from participation.
	Priority 5	Improved performance metrics and data capture (analysis by ward) to better understand the impact of the policy and the needs of the Council's customers who are digitally excluded.

## 6 Accompanying Strategy

For information on the Council's Digital Inclusion Strategy, what is the current focus and progress to date visit [www.basildon.gov.uk/Digital-Inclusion-Strategy](http://www.basildon.gov.uk/Digital-Inclusion-Strategy).

## 7 Links to other Corporate Policies or Partner documents

- Digital Inclusion Strategy
- Corporate Plan 2021 - 2024
- Economic Development Policy 2020 - 2024
- Basildon Borough Community Strategy 2012 - 2036
- Financial Inclusion and Resilience Policy 2020 - 2023
- Health and Wellbeing Policy and Strategy 2020 - 2025

## 8 Appendices

### Appendix 1: Definitions

- **The Essential Digital Skills Framework:**

*The Government Framework defines the skills needed to safely benefit from, participate in and contribute to the digital world of today and the future. The framework is intended to be used by everyone in the UK engaged in supporting adults to enhance their essential digital skills. ([Essential Digital Skills Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk))*

- **Ultrafast broadband:**

*'Ultrafast' broadband is a connection with download speeds (the priority over uploading) of more than 300Mbps, but less than 1Gbps (one gigabit per second, or 1000Mbps) and is typically delivered via fibre optic cables running the entire route between the property and the nearest exchange (Fibre To The Premise (FTTP)). The 1Gbps top speed, still categorised as 'ultrafast', is also sometimes also known as 'gigabit broadband'.*

- **Smart City:**

*A smart city is a technologically modern urban area that uses different types of electronic methods and sensors to collect specific data. Information gained from that data is used to manage assets, resources, and services efficiently; in return, that data is used to improve operations across the city. ([Smart city - Wikipedia](#) )*

- **Internet of things (IoT):**

*The Internet of things (IoT) describes physical objects (or groups of such objects) with sensors, processing ability, software, and other technologies that connect and exchange data with other devices and systems over the Internet or other communications networks. ([Internet of things - Wikipedia](#))*

- **5G network:**

*In telecommunications, 5G is the fifth-generation technology standard for broadband cellular networks, which cellular phone companies began deploying worldwide in 2019, and is the planned successor to the 4G networks which provide connectivity to most current cell phones. ([5G - Wikipedia](#))*

*Appendix 2: Highlighted local and national data sets / reports whose findings /results were considered in the development of the Council's Digital and Inclusion Policy.*

- **National statistics / reports**

- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/householdcharacteristics/homeinternetandsocialmediausage/bulletins/internetaccesshouseholdsandindividuals/2020>

- *In addition*, Office of National Statistics reported in 2019 that only 78% of disabled people access the internet, compared to 92% of non-disabled people.
- <https://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.html>
- [Digital Inclusion: Bridging Divides - Cumberland Lodge Report | Cumberland Lodge](#)
- [The economic impact of digital inclusion in the UK \(goodthingsfoundation.org\)](#)

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