Heart of the South West Digital Skills Partnership

2019–2020 ACTION PLAN

DIGITAL SKILLS
PARTNERSHIP
HEART OF THE SOUTH WEST

heart of the
south west
local enterprise partnership

DIGITAL SKILLS
PARTNERSHIP

The Government Digital Strategy

The UK Government's Digital Strategy sets out the ambition to create a world leading digital economy. This included a commitment to set up National Digital Skills Partnership with a pilot of six regional Digital Skills Partnerships, each responsible for adapting national campaigns to match the needs of their local communities. The Heart of the South West Digital Skills Partnership is based here, serving Somerset, Devon, Plymouth and Torbay.

Our vision is to make the Heart of the South West a place where individuals and businesses have the digital skills to succeed and thrive. The Partnership will support and inspire the development of digital skills and their adoption for everyone in the region; young, older, those entering work, looking to retrain or those with existing high levels of digital skills looking to advance further.

The Partnership will achieve this through:

- Driving demand for skills improvement from individuals and businesses

- Helping to set the direction, monitoring performance and targeted delivery of digital skills provision

- Identifying and accessing opportunities and investment in digital skills

- Recognising the need for continual change and so commit to and encourage deployment of agile ways of working, planning and upskilling

- Aligning with business needs – developing a pipeline of digital skills, developed and supported by education and skills providers

Launched in July 2017 by the then Minister of State for Digital, Matt Hancock, The Digital Skills Partnership brings together organisations from across all sectors to tackle the digital skills divide and ensure that digital skills initiatives are better coordinated and targeted more effectively. The aim is ambitious: to improve digital skills and capability levels across the skills spectrum. Each pilot Digital Skills Partnership is supported by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to ensure alignment with Government department digital skills policy and strategy.

In Autumn 2018 the Partnership commissioned **research** into the use and provision of digital skills in the region. Recommendations from the research and from meetings with stakeholders were reviewed by the Partnership and prioritised based on potential **impact** and **feasibility**. The Partnership has focused on the top third of the recommendations which have the potential to have the most impact and are within our power to achieve. These recommendations organised by theme form our local Digital Skills Partnership 2019–2020 Action Plan.

If implemented, what would the scale of the impact be? How feasible is it for the Partnership to implement?

Digital Careers:
Young People

- Develop materials that create awareness about the diverse range of roles within the digital sector.

- Encourage expert industry volunteers to support digital programmes that raise confidence and digital skills in others. For example approaching organisations that have staff volunteering programmes to outline how their digital savvy employees could enrol as digital volunteers for CodeClubs, Barefoot and STEM ambassador programmes.

- Ensure digital skill initiatives are adapted to maximise outcomes for learners with learning difficulties and disability (LDD).

- Work with STEM learning to ensure good Heart of the South West representation and take up of the Computer Science Training programme (2018−2021).

- Talk to young people in schools and colleges about the range of digital roles and different routes into digital careers.

- Monitor the Exeter Digital and Data Hub for a potential to extend the outputs across our wider geography.

- Collate online digital programs that support self-learning for example Code Academy, Solo Learn, Udacity, Code School and for younger people CoderDojo, W3 Schools into one 'easy to find' online source.

Digital Careers:
Entry and retraining

- Identify underrepresented groups within the digital workforce and target funding streams that will support delivery and address imbalances.

- Bid into digital skill delivery funds such as the Digital Inclusion Fund to support people taking first steps and building their digital confidence for careers. With a focus on providing an opportunity for underrepresented groups; women returners and those retraining, unemployed, and young people not in education or employment.

- Ensure digital skill initiatives are adapted to maximise outcomes for learners with learning difficulties and disability (LDD). Encourage LDD and Autistic Spectrum Disorder inclusive recruitment, interviewing and onboarding approaches.

- Support local providers to bid for National Retraining Scheme to work with emerging technologies.

- Collate online digital programs that support self-learning for example Code Academy, Solo Learn, Udacity, Code School and for younger people CoderDojo, W3 Schools into one 'easy to find' online source.

- Lobby Government to review the Apprenticeship Levy program to widen out access to micro and SME businesses.

Creating
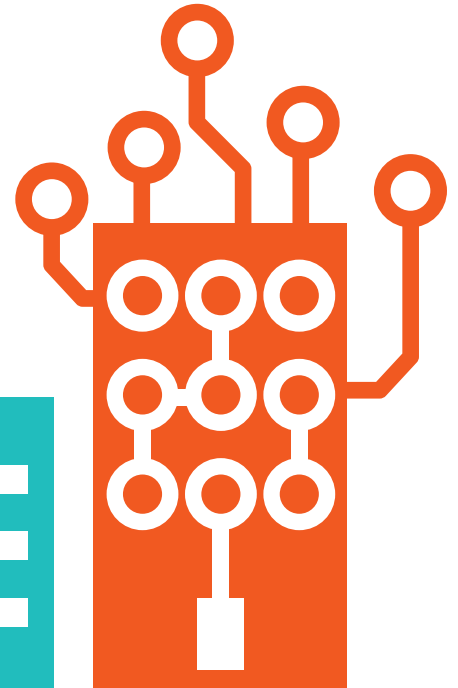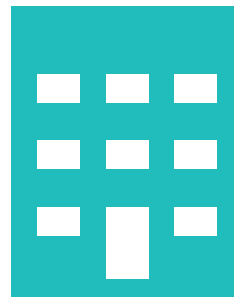# **industry-relevant**
Digital Skills

- Facilitate engagement between schools, Further Education and Higher Education with employers on the digital agenda to discuss new apprenticeship standards, course and industry 'match readiness' and galvanise employer support to raise awareness of the importance of digital skills to pupils.

- Work with business groups to agree on a set of digital skills questions to be included in partner's annual questionnaires. Overtime this data will act as a digital skills temperature test.

Developing, retaining and attracting a South West digital workforce

- Promote Higher and Degree level Apprenticeships both to individuals and businesses.

- Promote and support technology grassroots groups.

- Bid for funds to enable digital skills delivery that raises awareness and confidence among the SME community to support the long tail adoption of digital.

- Champion (regionally and nationally) the area's digital and technology companies, digital clusters and technology hubs.

Advocating the value of Digital Skills to individuals, business leaders and organisations

- Share the Digital Skills Partnership's Action Plan with the region's stakeholders to raise awareness of the Partnership's goals and ambitions.

- Raise awareness across the Heart of the South West community, evidenced by data and case studies about the transformative impacts of digital.

- Develop or work with a third party to create an interactive tool that enables individuals to benchmark their digital competency, and signposts suitable next stage development opportunities.

- Bid for funds to enable digital skills delivery that raises awareness and confidence among the SME community to support the long tail adoption of digital.

- Encourage the region's business leaders to become Digital Leaders who can confidently champion the value and investment in workplace digital skills development.

- Work with business groups to agree on a set of digital skills questions to be included in partner's annual questionnaires. Overtime this data will act as a digital skills temperature test.

Creating a
Heart of the South West digital hotbed

- Operate a transparent partnership that clearly sets out its ambition and shares progress against the Action Plan through an annual report.

- Develop a communication plan that underpins our Action Plan's success.

- Establish a framework that efficiently scans and appraises funding streams. Forming sub groups from Partners with relevant expertise to develop funding proposals.

- To support awareness and understanding, create a blueprint showing the region's digital skills stakeholders.

- Establish the Heart of the South West Digital Skills Partnership as the 'go to' promoter of all third party digital skill activity.

- Promote and support technology grassroots groups.

- Champion regionally and nationally the areas digital and technology companies, digital clusters and technology hubs.

- Add value by working with sub and cross regional infinitives such as the Greater Exeter Data Analytics Skills Escalator, the iMayFlower in Plymouth, Somerset's Digital Transformation Programme and the Institutes of Technology.

For more information on the Heart of the South West Digital Skills Partnership, please visit: www.hotswdigitalskills.com

Sign up to receive our monthly newsletter at **bit.ly/HoSW-DSP-News**

You can also join the conversation on Twitter and Linkedin with posts from the Digital Skills Partnership and the Careers Hub **@hotswskills&careers**