

[ eInclusion in the ]

# United Kingdom



ICT & Ageing

Geographic Digital Divide

eAccessibility

## eInclusion

Cultural Diversity

Inclusive eGovernment

Digital Literacy & Competences

Country Profile

History

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### **Disclaimer:**

This document is not intended to be exhaustive. Its purpose is to give an overview of the general eInclusion status in the United Kingdom. Even though every care has been taken to ensure accuracy, the information herein should be treated as indicative and no responsibility for errors can be assumed. Neither the European Commission, nor any person acting on its behalf can be held responsible for the use that could be made of the information provided.

## Country Profile

### Basic data and indicators

#### Basic Data

**Population (1 000):** 62 008.0 inhabitants (2010)

**GDP at market prices:** 1 566 740.7 million Euros (2009)

**GDP per inhabitant in PPS (Purchasing Power Standards, EU-27 = 100):** 116 (2009)

**GDP growth rate:** -4.9 % (2009)

**Inflation rate:** 6.3 % (2008)

**Unemployment rate:** 7.6 % (2009)

**Government debt/GDP:** 68.1 % (2009)

**Public balance (government deficit or surplus/GDP):** -11.5 % (2009)

*Source:* [Eurostat](#)

**Area:** 244 820 km<sup>2</sup>

**Capital city:** London

**Official EU language:** English

**Currency:** Pound Sterling

*Source:* [Europa website](#)

#### Information Society Indicators

**Percentage of households with Internet access:** 77 % (2009)

**Percentage of households with broadband connection:** 95 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet:** 76 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for uploading self-created content:** 19 % (2008)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for reading online newspapers/magazines:** 43 % (2009)

**Percentage of Individuals using the Internet for finding information about goods and services:** 64 % (2009)

**Percentage of Individuals using the Internet for seeking health-related information:** 34 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for looking for a job or sending a job application:** 25 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for doing an online course:** 7 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for seeking information with the purpose of learning:** 31 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for interaction with public authorities:** obtaining information 29.7 %, downloading forms 18.9 %, returning filled forms 16.7 % (2009)

*Source:* [Eurostat](#)

*Editorial notice: Statistical indicators referenced in this section reflect those of Eurostat at the time the Edition is being prepared.*

## eInclusion History

### Main developments and key milestones (in reverse chronological order)

For the latest developments, see: [ePractice news for eInclusion](#)

## Recent News

### July 2010

On 12 July 2010, the Prime Minister David Cameron and the 'UK Digital Champion' (for eInclusion) Lane Fox launched the [Manifesto for a Networked Nation](#), pledging to get online by 2012 everyone in the UK who is not yet online. The report estimates that around 10 million people in the UK do not have access to the Internet, or have never used it, and that there are enormous benefits to citizens from Internet use.

### June 2010

- ▶ On 30 June 2010, the first draft of the **Digital Scotland report** was launched, by the **Digital Scotland** working group of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, chaired by Professor Michael Fourman. The report concentrated on a number of vital issues that need urgently to be addressed in Scotland and the rest of the UK to ensure that the coverage, speed and use of the digital infrastructure will enable the exploitation of the opportunities of the digital world.
- ▶ On 18 June 2010, the new coalition government announced the appointment of the '**UK Digital Champion**' (for eInclusion), with the mission to focus on encouraging as many people as possible to go online, and to improve the convenience and efficiency of public services by driving online delivery. The person appointed is the Internet entrepreneur Martha Lane Fox. Ms Fox has held a similar appointment with the previous administration. She will be supported by the Cabinet Office in her role of advising and challenging the Government, the wider public sector and industry on making faster progress on getting more people and services online.
- ▶ The first digital edition of '[The New Londoners](#)', a magazine whose aim is to build understanding between the old and new London communities, was published on 17 June 2010. In addition, the magazine is to be issued quarterly instead of annually. 'The New Londoners' is produced by the [Migrants Resource Centre](#) with the input of many volunteers and users from the organisation's Migrant and Refugee Media Action Group. It provides a platform for new Londoners to convey their stories directly to all Londoners in order to raise awareness on the lives of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and celebrate their positive contribution to life in London.

During the same month, it was announced that the number of people in the UK who use the Internet grew by five percent over the last year – an increase of 1.9 million – with more than half of new users (53 %) coming in the over-50s age bracket. The size of the UK's online audience grew from 36.9 million people in May 2009 to 38.8 million people in May 2010, according to [UKOM](#), a subsidiary of market research company Nielsen. The majority of online newcomers (722 000) were men over 50, and 15 % (284 000) were women over 50.

### April 2010

- ▶ On 6 April 2010, following a debate where amendments by the House of Lords were accepted in full, the parliamentary process was completed for the new [Equality Act](#) (2010). The Act has two main purposes – to harmonise discrimination law, and to strengthen the law to support progress on equality. The result has brought considerable simplification to the UK array of such laws by replacing and incorporating almost all previous legislation on related matters.

## March 2010

- ▶ The [National Plan for Digital Participation](#) was published by the **Digital Participation Consortium**. The Consortium chaired by the communications regulator **Ofcom**, comprised over 65 representatives from industry and the third sector. The Plan set a target for a 60 per cent reduction in the 12.5 million people who were found not to be currently online, with older people and the less well-off a particular focus. To help achieve this reduction the Consortium was to lead a social marketing campaign and to distribute funding for projects to help people get interested in and learn to use the Internet.

## February 2010

- ▶ The [British Council](#) and the Institute of Community Cohesion ([iCoCo](#)) launched the [Intercultural Dialogue online resource guide](#). This guide has, for the first time, offered policy makers and practitioners around the world practical advice and good practice examples to support work on Intercultural Dialogue (ICD). The online resource guide refers to factors which contribute to the intercultural dialogue, and the challenges and opportunities that this agenda presents for those working in order to improve understanding within and between communities at a local, national and international levels. It makes clear, however, that short term interventions within local communities, cities or countries cannot suffice. The online guide has offered planning and measuring tools to assess the impact ICD has had on individuals, the local community and society, as a whole. It also comprises a comprehensive databank of national and international case studies illustrating approaches to ICD through themes such as arts, sports and faith.

During the same month, the digital inclusion programme 'Get Digital' was launched to provide digital inclusion and literacy to elderly residents in sheltered housing schemes. It was estimated that at the time of the launch, two thirds of the over 65 year-old residents of sheltered housing did not have access to the Internet and other online services. The Get Digital scheme - funded by Communities and Local Government (CLG) - was to offer grants to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to help set up appropriate facilities and provide all the necessary support to ensure residents could make full use of them. Local schools could also link up with sheltered housing schemes so that young and elder people could learn together. The programme is expected to run until the end of March 2011 and by then it is expected to:

- work with 195 sheltered housing schemes nationwide - including 81 schemes in rural areas - providing Internet access to around 7 800 residents;
- extend Internet access to a further 300 schemes and up to 20 000 residents in total;
- develop communal IT facilities in sheltered housing schemes making technology easily accessible to the 600 000 people who live in sheltered housing, as well as others in the local community;
- provide resources including expert scheme training and support to boost residents' computer literacy; and
- promote and support 'Get Digital partnerships' between sheltered housing and local schools, and other groups of young people for 'intergenerational learning activities'.

## January 2010

On 11 January 2010, the UK Business Secretary announced the launch of a pilot IT programme whose objective is to provide adults with online free-of-charge IT courses. The development of '[Online basics](#)' by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, [UK online centres](#) and government agency [Becta](#) shapes part of the government's response to the '[Baroness Estelle Morris's Review of ICT User Skills](#)' (June 2009). The report recommended support for the 11.6 million adults in England of all ages and all levels of education who do not have basic IT skills to help them become familiar with technology. This complements the government's national level of '[Home Access](#)' for children aged around seven to

thirteen (National Curriculum's Years 3 to 9) also announced on the same day by the Department of Children, Schools and Families.

## News 2009 and before

### 2009

- ▶ The *24 January 2009*, was the last day of the public consultation on the Action Plan entitled: [Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation](#), published as a cross-government report in October 2008. Those interested could comment on the Plan, either via email or online via the dedicated [discussion forum](#), or in writing. According to the moderator of the online forum, officials from communities and local government were regularly posting specific questions and ideas on the forum and asked for feedback. This feedback was later utilised in the decision-making process.
- ▶ In *August 2009*, a report by the **Welsh Affairs Committee** recommended that the Wales Office and the Welsh Assembly Government ensure 'UK digital inclusion initiatives meet Welsh needs and build on existing good work to deliver on Welsh digital ambitions'. The report highlighted the urgent need for the eradication of broadband 'not-spots' (areas with limited or no access to high speed Internet connections), and for more support to help a wider range of people use technology effectively.

The Committee recommended that the Welsh Assembly should also find a way to become fully involved with the UK digital inclusion and Digital Britain work and that one-stop-shops should be created to provide advice on the risks for young people using technology. The Committee commended the Assembly's work tackling internet related crimes and proposed that it was promoted as part of the economic development strategy in Wales.

During the same month, an announcement was made by the Cabinet Office that the new Director of Digital Engagement was Andrew Stott, the Government Deputy Chief Information Officer. He has had director-level oversight within the Cabinet Office for the Power of Information work from its inception and was a member of the Minister for Digital Engagement's Power of Information Taskforce.

During the same month, it was announced by the Under Secretary for the Department for Communities and Local Government that a network of 'Digital Inclusion Advisors' was in operation to offer a free advice service to Local Strategic Partnerships, funded by the Communities and Local Government Department. Using a range of skills, tools and research, the Digital Inclusion Advisors could deliver recommendations around issues and opportunities in digital inclusion in local areas.

### 2008

- ▶ In *November 2008*, two collections of assistive technologies, namely '**AccessAT**' and '**AccessFun**' were developed by the non-profit organisation [AbilityNet](#), based on work carried out by the Regional Support Centre ([RSC](#)) for Scotland. The 'AccessAT' collection offered Open Source and freeware solutions for meeting the needs of disabled people wanting to use a computer. These included tools for the blind, for people with dyslexia and for those with physical disabilities. 'AccessFun' was a pen drive made up of games, music, utilities and storybooks aimed at disabled children and youngsters. The pen drive offers over 50 applications to entertain and amuse kids of any ability.
- ▶ On *24 October 2008*, the Department for Communities and Local Government published the cross-government report entitled '[Delivering Digital Inclusion: An Action Plan for Consultation](#)'. Public consultation on the document remained open until 19 January 2009. The Action Plan was officially launched by the Secretary of State for Wales and Digital Inclusion Minister, Paul Murphy, at the Holborn Library UK online centre, as part of the 'National Get Online Day'.

During the same month, a new online tool named '[solutions4inclusion](#)' was officially launched to accompany the publication of the Action Plan. 'Solutions4inclusion' today aims to raise awareness

and encourage creativity in the use of technology to improve services to socially excluded and challenged client groups. The site contains hundreds of ideas and projects that can be searched in three clicks. Up to August 2010, 'solutions4inclusion' has comprised a total of 874 quality-checked projects, of which 655 have been updated and 58 have been added in the last 3 months.

- ▶ The government announced ([Department for Children, Schools and Family – Official press release](#)) that children from unemployed and low income families would receive a free computer and free broadband access under major plans to close the digital divide amongst young people. The £ 300 (€ 340.2) million investment served the aim that every single young person should be able to use a computer and the Internet at home for his education. The initial 'Home Access' package proposed, included:
  - broadband for all young people between 7 and 19, whose families were eligible;
  - a free laptop or other computer with relevant software and hardware bought with a 'Home Access' voucher;
  - support covering important areas such as Internet safety, effective use of technology for learning and a technical support helpline.
- ▶ On *23 September 2008*, an independent report by the leading industry and educational experts manning the '**Home Access Taskforce**' recommended boosting educational equality by ensuring that every 5-19 year-old could log on to the Internet at home by 2011.

## 2007

- ▶ In *July 2007*, a new survey in the UK revealed that 75 % of the socially excluded were also shut out of the digital revolution, with little or no access to the Internet and other digital advances. This was considered as being the first time that a definite link between social and digital exclusion had been firmly established. The survey was contained in a report entitled '**Understanding digital inclusion**', by the [UK Online Centres](#) and researchers FreshMinds. The report was compiled using findings from over 80 different sources, including the Office of National Statistics, Ofcom, the Oxford Internet Institute and other government departments. One of the findings was that between 2007 and 2004, only marginally more people went on-line, despite numerous government and market forces initiatives.
- ▶ In *June 2007*, Sunderland City Council won £3.5 (€ 3.9) million in the UK government's '**Digital Challenge**' contest to come up with the best ways of using technology to benefit the socially excluded. In the contest, 79 councils outlined their visions for a digitally enabled society, meeting the needs of local communities and citizens more effectively. The ten finalists, including Sunderland, formed a group called 'DC-10' which, aimed to provide inspiring examples of using digital technology to tackle social exclusion.

## 2006

- ▶ An [IDeA](#)-commissioned study of local authorities revealed that online eGovernment services have failed to reach several of their main target audiences, namely people with literacy and learning problems, the disabled and low-income families. In other words, despite the eGovernment push, the socially excluded remained also digitally excluded.
- ▶ In *March 2006*, the Welsh Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration, Edwina Hart, presented her government's new [programme](#) **Communities@One**, which aimed to bridge the digital divide from the grass roots up using the so-called 'community brokers' to assess genuine local needs. 'Communities@One' used technology to achieve social inclusion in some of the most deprived communities in Wales, as well as both the voluntary and the community sectors.

During the same month, the Scottish Executive was engaged in a [consultation](#) process with the aim to produce an updated version of its strategy on digital inclusion and to draft an action plan in the coming months.

## 2005

- ▶ The report 'e-Government: Reaching socially excluded groups?' was launched at the [Improvement and Development Agency \(IDeA\)](#) e-Champions network annual conference and exhibition on *20 September 2005*. Based on research performed by Citizens Online and IECR (Internet and Electronic Commerce Research Ltd) for the IDeA, the report gave an overview of the councils' digital inclusion (social inclusion/ ICT) activities. The conclusion was that the UK's eGovernment programme should focus more on social and digital inclusion, if it were to be successful. Groups such as the unemployed, the disabled, those with language and literacy difficulties, the elderly, the lone parents and others were considered as being at risk of a digital divide. The report stated that accessibility issues were addressed to a certain extent by web accessibility standards, or by legislation such as Disability Discrimination Act; there were serious gaps in understanding the diverse needs of citizens and how to make eGovernment inclusive.
- ▶ According to a new report from the [Department for Education and Skills](#) (DfES), presented on *29 March 2005*, the public access points called the 'UK online centres', could sustain strong demand for eGovernment services among users, as long as access and support were available through these centres. The report concluded that public access points could help raise the public's awareness of eGovernment services, particularly among certain groups of the population and thus reduce the digital divide.

## 2004

- ▶ The UK [Department for Culture, Media and Sport](#) (DCMS) announced on *11 May 2004* that its website was available by telephone. This step towards multi-channel access to information also allowed the blind, the partially sighted and those with no Internet connection to acquire access to the department's website content.

The service was first run as a three-month trial during which anyone in the UK could ring 0845 333 0850 at local rate charges to gain voice access to the entire content of the DCMS website. According to Government data, around 90 % of those blind or partially sighted did not possess a computer.

- ▶ According to a survey released by the then [Disability Rights Commission](#) (currently called the 'Equality and Human Rights Commission') in *April 2004*, most UK public sector websites were still failing to comply with accessibility guidelines, making their use by disabled people difficult or almost impossible. However, the performance of private sector websites was found to have been even worse.

The Commission's report contained 15 key recommendations aimed at government, the web industry, business and disability organisations. Among those recommendations, raising awareness of web accessibility needs, accredited website development and use of appropriate assistive technology were the most important.

## 2003

- ▶ A new survey entitled '**Tests and ranking for the Major UK Central Government Websites**' was carried out using automated testing software to compare the functionality of 55 leading government sites. The result was that nearly all sites tested contained a significant number of errors and broken links. In addition, an internal investigation made by the Office of the e-Envoy concluded that 78% of public sector websites, around 800, did not meet standards for being fully accessible to users with disabilities.
- ▶ On *20 March 2003*, in the report entitled 'Progress in making eServices accessible to all - encouraging use by older people', the [National Audit Office](#) (NAO) stated that while the elderly were among the potential main beneficiaries of electronic services, only 17 % of people aged over 65 had access to the Internet. The report claimed that unless the government proactively promoted eServices among the elderly, the digital divide was set to grow.

As part of its conclusion, the report recommended that the Office of the e-Envoy carried out a marketing campaign to highlight the benefits of eServices to all. It also recommended that the needs of older people and people with disabilities should be taken into greater consideration when developing such services, even when these services were delivered through information kiosks or digital television.

# eInclusion Strategy

## Main strategic objectives and principles

### eInclusion policies and strategies

Current policy and strategy in eInclusion in the UK is based on the following documents:

- ▶ The national **Digital Strategy** of 2005, which included policies tackling social exclusion, the persistent digital divide and the low uptake of eGovernment services by citizens.
- ▶ The **Digital Britain report**, published in 2009, which also introduced the term **digital participation** as a goal towards achieving eInclusion, followed by
- ▶ The **National Plan for Digital Participation**, published in March 2010, and
- ▶ The more recent [Manifesto for a Networked Nation](#), set forward by the new coalition government in July 2010.

### The Manifesto for a Networked Nation

This is the latest addition in eInclusion policies, which "challenges people and organisations in every sector and in every corner of the country to work together to inspire, encourage and support as many people as possible to get online by the end of the Olympic year." The [Manifesto](#) pledges to get online by 2012 everyone in the UK who is not yet online. It estimated that around 10 million people in the UK do not have access to the Internet, or have never used it, and that there are enormous benefits to citizens from the Internet use. Supported by the [Race Online 2012](#) initiative, the document puts forward the following:

- ▶ Lack of motivation, access and skills are the key reasons why people do not get online.
- ▶ Inspiring people and nudging them towards trying the Internet for the first time, is vital:
  - 59 % of people do not see a reason to get online, and this rises to 63 % of those 65-74 and over
  - 14 % of people cite cost as a barrier, but this increases in younger groups with it being an issue for 51 % of those aged 25-34
  - A quarter of people say they do not have the necessary skills, rising to 33 % of over 75s.

The manifesto, subsequently, concludes with nine specific recommendations for action:

#### ▶ Inspiring more people to try the Internet

1. Leaders at every level of industry, government and the charitable sector should embed manifesto challenges into corporate plans and make [Race Online 2012](#) pledges by the end of year 2010.
2. Industry and media partners should develop specific strategies to communicate the positive benefits of the Internet to 10 million potential new online consumers.
3. Funding organisations should develop plans to support charities, social enterprises and community groups to raise awareness of the benefits of Internet use to the people that they serve.

#### ▶ Encouraging people to go online and rewarding them for doing so

4. Government should expect people of working age to use some key online services and signpost those who need help to web access and training points.
5. Adults starting informal or formal education should be expected to have to go through work programmes to acquire basic IT skills.

6. '[Race Online 2012](#)' partners from all sectors should develop a package of rewards for going online and passing on web skills.
- ▶ **Supporting those who need a helping hand**
7. People must know where they can find local web access and/or training points and where they can go to get assistance with online public services, supported by local digital champions in every community.
8. There should be effort towards ensuring that people have easy and affordable access to the Internet in the same way they can access water, electricity or gas.
9. Industry should ensure that products and services are usable and accessible for older and disabled people.

## The National Plan for Digital Participation

The **Digital Britain White Paper** identified **digital participation** as increasingly crucial for full participation in 21st century society, bringing extensive potential benefits for UK citizens, the UK economy and the provision of public services. Setting out an ambition to secure the UK's position as one of the world's leading digital knowledge economies, the report called for the creation of a **National Plan for Digital Participation** and also announced the establishment of the **Digital Participation Consortium**, made up of over 65 representatives from industry and the third sector, and chaired by the communications regulator Ofcom.

The [National Plan for Digital Participation](#), published in March 2010, set a target for a 60 per cent reduction in the 12.5 million people who were not currently online, with older people and the less well off, being a particular focus. To help achieve this reduction, the Consortium was to lead a social marketing campaign and distribute funding for projects to help people gain interest in and learn to use the Internet.

Furthermore, the position of the **Champion for Digital Inclusion** was established in June 2009, and the Internet entrepreneur Martha Lane Fox became the first holder of the post. Both the position and the person appointed were retained by the new coalition government, post 11 May 2010. Using the [Race Online 2012](#) initiative, the Digital Inclusion Champion aims to bring everybody in the UK online by 2012, with particular emphasis on the four million people who are considered to be socially and economically excluded.

## The Broadband Strategy

The previous UK Government had announced that the provision of 'universal' broadband communications at a rate of 2Mbps for all, would be achieved by 2012. This target has been [pushed back](#) to 2015 by the new coalition government. As 2Mbps is the realistic minimum speed for consumers to be able to use high-end digital services (such as the BBC's Iplayer service), this means that many people, while technically being given online access, may miss out on important services.

## Policies and strategies in the devolved administrations

### Scotland

The Scottish Executive launched a digital inclusion strategy called '**Connecting Scotland's People**' to tackle the digital divide in 2001. In 2009, another document, entitled [Digital Participation in Scotland - a Strategy and Action Plan 2010](#) outlined a broad strategy to ensure that Scotland achieves greater digital participation among its people and businesses, for the economic, financial, social, community and personal benefits that this will bring. It also represented a contribution to the forthcoming 3-year UK National Plan for Digital Participation (NPDP) to be produced by an Ofcom-led consortium, following the

UK Government's Digital Britain report. The plan brought together an end-to-end picture that took note of access, infrastructure, inclusion, exclusion, barriers and benefits in Scotland.

In addition, the Royal Society of Edinburgh did set up a **Digital Scotland** working group, to take a broader view of the ways in which technological change could be stimulated and exploited for economic and social benefit, and to explore these within the particular economic, social and geographic context of Scotland. The group's intention is to stimulate debate, to identify priorities, to suggest the role that governmental and non-governmental factors might play in exploiting the digital world and to recommend some strategic priorities for Scotland.

The first draft of the (interim) **Digital Scotland** report was launched on 30 June 2010. The report concentrates on four key areas – users, infrastructure, content and benchmarks – and develops four major recommendations:

- ▶ to remove fiscal and regulatory obstacles to universal connectivity;
- ▶ to enable competition and cooperation;
- ▶ to stimulate development and uptake;
- ▶ to ensure universal access and digital inclusion.

The final report will evolve considerably, particularly in developing the key challenges and in elaborating recommendations that will address them. Online public comments are invited at: <http://digital-scotland.blogspot.com>.

## Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government has put forward its strategy for eInclusion in the form of a document entitled: '**Delivering digital inclusion - A strategic framework for Wales**'. The document makes it clear that even though the government will provide strategic leadership, progress can only be made through the concerted efforts of the private, third and public sectors, rather than the government alone. It emphasises the need for a wide range of stakeholders to 'buy in' to the vision of achieving digital inclusion. It is estimated that 900 000 adults are digitally excluded in Wales. The Framework explains the considerable benefits, individually and collectively, of people going online. It also identifies the key groups of excluded people, the barriers they face and what steps can be taken to start addressing the issues. The framework is currently undergoing a public consultation process, which includes holding four consultation events across Wales. Following the consultation period, it is envisaged that a revised Framework will be published by the Welsh Assembly Government (during November/December 2010).

A strategic digital inclusion initiative, [Communities 2.0](#), established in April 2009, has put the initial focus of support on the 30 % most deprived communities. The initiative aims to break down barriers to engagement with technologies, to support new and existing social enterprise to engage with ICT, improve performance and increase digital inclusion. Actions include training, mentoring and technical support; ICT-related business support, research and best practice.

The Wales Co-operative centre is working in partnership with the University of Glamorgan, Carmarthenshire County Council, Novas Scarman and the Pembrokeshire Association of Voluntary Services to deliver the programme on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government. The budget of £ 19.9 (€ 22.5) million will be available for over six years and the project will build on the previous Communities@One initiative to move digital inclusion to the next logical stage.

## Northern Ireland

The [Digital Inclusion Unit](#) of the Department of Finance and Personnel, Northern Ireland Executive, aims to facilitate a digitally inclusive society by increasing skills on and access to low cost, convenient computing and internet technology. The unit is led by the Department of Finance and Personnel, whose strategy comprises steps to:

- ▶ commission surveys to track both the extent of the digital divide and the obstacles to a greater use of computing and Internet technologies;
- ▶ commission research to establish the full range across the public, private, community and voluntary sectors of current and planned initiatives with a digital inclusion element;
- ▶ make available, through phone and the Internet, an information database on all public Internet access points in Northern Ireland;
- ▶ participate in a Digital Inclusion Steering Group consisting of representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. This group will implement and monitor projects to enable citizens to fully use computers and the Internet to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness and quality of life;
- ▶ implement a 'Home Computing Initiative' throughout the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the public sector.

## eInclusion Legal Framework

### Main legal texts impacting on the development of eInclusion

#### Legislation to protect from exclusion

##### [Equality Act](#)

The **Equality Act 2010** has become the main legal anti-discrimination instrument in the UK since its approval by parliament on 6 April 2010. The primary purpose of the Act is to codify the complicated and numerous array of acts and regulations, which formed the basis of anti-discrimination law in the United Kingdom. This was, primarily, the **Equal Pay Act 1970**, the **Sex Discrimination Act 1975**, the **Race Relations Act 1976**, the **Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005**, the previous **Equality Act of 2006** and three major statutory instruments protecting discrimination in employment on grounds of religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. The Act covers all forms of discrimination, including those which cause exclusion from access to electronic means of work or communication. In particular, the new Act, which, in effect, harmonises and strengthens discrimination law:

- ▶ Places a new duty on certain public bodies to consider socio-economic disadvantage when making strategic decisions about how to exercise their functions.
- ▶ Extends the circumstances in which a person is protected against discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of a protected characteristic.
- ▶ Extends the circumstances in which a person is protected against discrimination by allowing people to make a claim, if they are directly discriminated against because of a combination of two relevant protected characteristics.
- ▶ Creates a duty on listed public bodies when carrying out their functions and on other persons when carrying out public functions to have due regard to: the need to eliminate conduct which the Act prohibits; the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and, the need to foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not. The practical effect is that listed public bodies will have to consider how their policies, programmes and service delivery will affect people with the protected characteristics.
- ▶ Allows an employer or service provider, or other organisation to take positive action so as to enable existing or potential employees or customers to overcome or minimise a disadvantage arising from a protected characteristic.
- ▶ Extends the permission for political parties to use women-only shortlists for election candidates to 2030.
- ▶ Enables an employment tribunal to make a recommendation to a respondent who has lost a discrimination claim to take certain steps to remedy matters not just for the benefit of the individual claimant (who may have already left the organisation concerned), but also for the wider workforce.
- ▶ Amends family property law to remove discriminatory provisions and provides additional statutory property rights for civil partners in England and Wales.
- ▶ Amends the Civil Partnership Act 2004 to remove the prohibition on civil partnerships being registered in religious premises.

##### [Disability Equality Duty](#)

The disability equality duty was originally introduced into legislation in the Disability Discrimination Act (amended 2005) and carried over in the new Equality Act. It means that public bodies must have '**due regard**' to the need to:

- ▶ promote equality of opportunity between disabled persons and other persons;
- ▶ eliminate discrimination that is unlawful under the Act;
- ▶ eliminate harassment of disabled persons that is related to their disabilities;
- ▶ promote positive attitudes towards disabled persons;
- ▶ encourage participation by disabled persons in public life; and,
- ▶ take steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, even where that involves treating disabled persons more favourably than other persons (e.g. the provision of an accessible parking bay near a building, where parking is not available for other visitors or employees.)

### The Rights of the Individual

The Equality Act (2006) introduced a new single equality body, the [Equality and Human Rights Commission \(EHRC\)](#). This new equality body came into force on 1 October 2007 and replaced the Disability Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Race Equality. The commission's functions relate to promoting and enforcing discrimination legislation under six strands: race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, religion or belief and age. In addition, the rights of the individual are protected through legislation on Data Protection (1998), Human Rights (1998) and Freedom of Information (2000).

## eCommunications Legislation

### [Communications Act 2003](#)

The **Communications Act** of 2003, implemented by **Ofcom** (the UK communications regulator), imposes the following accessibility obligations in relation to fixed voice telephony services:

- ▶ funding of text relay service (Universal Service Provider only, by means of a specific universal service condition);
- ▶ access to text relay service and rebate scheme (all providers through the general conditions);
- ▶ certain requirements to make all public payphones accessible to customers with disabilities (all public payphone providers) – at least 75 % of public payphones provided in the UK (50 % of those provided in Hull) must be accessible by reasonable means to customers in wheelchairs; at least 70 % of all public payphones must incorporate additional receiving amplification (note: there is a distinction between public call booths and 'managed' payphones i.e. on private sites) – it is proposed to increase this and also restore a requirement for inductive coupling;
- ▶ directory information free of charge and through connection (all providers);
- ▶ bills/contract provision in Braille / large print (all providers);
- ▶ access to emergency services (through the text relay service – Typetalk) is also required.

In addition, in 2008, the national regulator OFCOM issued a statutory notification concerning the Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services that specifies, amongst other things, that these must comply with obligations concerning 'special measures for end-users with disabilities.'

Direct obligations in relation to special equipment are not imposed on the telecommunications services sector. However, local authorities provide (or financially support the acquisition of) text telephones and other special telecoms equipment through assistive technology and/or other (social) services.

### Mobile operators

The [Mobile Industry Good Practice Guide for Service Delivery for Disabled and Elderly Customers in the UK](#) was designed in 2003 to advise and assist the mobile industry, including network

operators, service providers and retailers on how to make their products and services more accessible to the UK's disabled and elderly consumers. The guide has since been adopted by a number of major operators and contains advice on how to meet legislative/regulatory requirements under the Disability Discrimination Act (now Equality Act 2010) and the Communications Act (2003), as well as on themes where work should be done on a self-regulatory basis to ensure that disabled customers' needs are met.

## Broadcasting

The Communications Act requires analogue and digital channels to provide subtitles for 80 % or 90 % of their programmes; it also sets targets for the provision of signs and audio description for the blind.

For television, the Act requires that **Ofcom** (the regulator) must draw up, and from time to time review and revise, a code giving guidance as to the extent to which television services should promote the understanding and enjoyment by people who are deaf or hard of hearing, as well as those who are blind or partially sighted, or have dual sensory impairment (deaf-blind). These targets are set in the [Code for Television Access Services](#). The code applies to a broad spectrum of both public and private broadcasters. Ofcom is required to set ten year targets for television access services – subtitling, signing and audio description.

The size of the targets depends upon the size and audience of the broadcaster, with different anniversary dates for different broadcasters/channels (linked to time they were established etc.). For subtitling, the targets range from 10 % to 100 % of programming now, rising to 80 % or more for all broadcasters by 2014. For signing, targets range from 1 % to 5 % of programming over varying timeframes. For audio description, targets range from 4 % to 10 % over varying timeframes.

An annex to the Code provides guidelines on good practice for subtitling, signing and audio description.

With regard to digital television, the same statutory requirements apply, but, in addition, under the 2003 Act, Ofcom has to ensure that “domestic electronic communications apparatus is developed which is capable of being used with ease, and without modification, by the widest possible range of individuals (including those with disabilities)”.

## eAccessibility Legislation

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995, updated in 2005) and its inclusion in the [Equality Act 2010](#), provide the main legislative basis for website accessibility. The original Act contains provisions to prevent discrimination against the disabled by service providers and requires service providers to make reasonable adjustments so that services are accessible.

The [Disability Equality Duty](#) (see section above) introduced a positive duty on the providers of public websites and the way public procurement of new IT systems should address the issue.

Regarding guidelines, the **Cabinet Office Guidelines for UK Government Websites** (non mandatory) have been available for a number of years, providing a best practice framework for guidance on the management of UK government websites. They included targets for public web sites of priority AA of version 1 of W3C guidelines.

In addition, the **Publicly Available Specification** (PAS) was developed by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) in collaboration with the British Standards Institution (BSI), [PAS 78:2006](#) PAS 78:2006, and came into effect on 8 March 2006. These specifications provide a comprehensive set of guidelines for all public and private organisations who wish to observe good practice when commissioning public facing websites and web-based services. Following additional development by BSI, PAS 78:2006 evolved into a draft standard, the [Draft BS 8878](#) for accessible websites in 2009. A public consultation on its amendment is currently in progress.

## Public Procurement Regulations

The UK [Public Contracts Regulations \(2006\)](#), ([amended in 2009](#)), are intended to implement the EU Directives by regulating procurement procedures for most public authorities in the UK. Article 9(3), regarding technical specifications, states that a contracting authority “shall, wherever possible, take into account accessibility for disabled persons or the suitability for design for all users.”

Public authorities that are subject to the Disability Equality Duty under the DDA 2005 are required to include disability considerations in the process of procuring, or commissioning a service. This duty requires public authorities to be proactive in ensuring that disabled people are treated equally in terms of access to services. The Code of Practice explicitly sets out the terms that public authorities are required to include in external contracts to ensure the inclusion of disability considerations. The DED applies to all types of services and the Code of Practice for government departments gives examples of the procurement of new IT systems and the re-design of a department’s website by external contractors, as services to which the procurement policy applies under the DED. There is an explicit reference to the need to ensure that websites are fully accessible to disabled people.

Guidance on the new Disability Equality duty has been published. It states that: “where disability equality is relevant a public authority will be expected to build it into the specification not only to comply with their duty under the DDA but also under the EU Directive and associated UK Regulations.”

The Publicly Available Specification (PAS 78, 2006) is an information document on procuring accessible websites. The Guide was commissioned by the Disability Rights Commission in collaboration with the British Standards Institute and in consultation with organisations in the charitable and private sectors.

The **Office of Government Commerce** (OGC), now part of the **Efficiency and Reform Group** within the [Cabinet Office](#) indicates in its guidelines that, whenever public authorities purchase goods that may be used by disabled people this should then be appropriately reflected in the specification. This could include, among other things, IT equipment and software.

## eInclusion Actors

### Main roles and responsibilities

#### National eInclusion

##### Policy/Strategy

###### Cabinet Office

The new coalition government coming into office after 11 May 2010 has not retained the position of 'Minister for Digital Inclusion' created by the previous government. Responsibility for these issues has been transferred to the Cabinet Office and individual government departments.

The **Cabinet Office** holds political responsibility for government reform and modernisation and for the UK's eGovernment and eInclusion strategy and policy. It is a government department whose role is to support the Government's delivery and reform programme.

**The Efficiency and Reform Group** is a newly formed structure based in the Cabinet Office. Its mission is to undertake a coordinated approach to tackling waste and improving accountability across all government departments. This includes exploiting economies of scale and reducing duplication, as well as looking for efficiencies in procurement, project management, property, human resources and ICT. The Group is governed by a Board, chaired jointly by the Chief Secretary to the Treasury and the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The Group has an overall responsibility for ICT and the online delivery of services.

##### Coordination

###### Cabinet Office

The Cabinet supports **Central Government Departments, Agencies and Bodies** in charge of implementing departmental or sector-specific systems and projects. The Minister for the Cabinet Office also has direct leadership responsibility for the online delivery of services.

###### **Efficiency and Reform Group**

The Efficiency and Reform Group, chaired by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, has a project management and advisory role in ICT projects, the online delivery of services and eInclusion initiatives. It has also undertaken the ownership of the government portal [Directgov](http://Directgov), whose services are currently under review with the aim to increase citizens' engagement.

##### Implementation

###### Race Online 2012

Race Online 2012 is a Government funded but independent initiative, set up by Martha Lane Fox to support her work as the **UK Digital Champion**. The aim is to inspire and encourage more people to go online, rewarding them for doing so and to support those who need a helping hand. The organisation calls upon industry, competing for more online customers; Government, needing to deliver better for less; and charities, wanting to better support the people they help.

###### Equality and Human Rights Commission

The Equality Act (2006) introduced a new single equality body, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). This new equality body, which was also retained by the new Equality Act of 2010, came into force on 1 October 2007 and replaces the Disability Rights Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Commission for Race Equality. The commission's functions relate to promoting and enforcing discrimination legislation under six strands: race, disability, gender, sexual

orientation, religion or belief and age. The rights of the individual are also protected through legislation on Data Protection (1998), Human Rights (1998) and Freedom of Information (2000).

## Support

### Ofcom

The independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries (**Ofcom**) has as a primary duty to further the interests of citizens and consumers in communications matters. To this end, regulatory interventions are implemented to safeguard access and inclusion in digital communications, particularly where they involve the most disadvantaged sections of society. Ofcom's work both complements and reinforces that of government, as well as the voluntary and private sectors. Using evidence and analysis, Ofcom helps to shape the future regulatory framework, both in the UK and the EU.

### **Local Authorities**

Various bodies operate in the UK to offer support on inclusion at local level. An umbrella organisation is [Solutions4Inclusion](#), created by a project between Communities and Local Government (CLG), Tech4i2 Limited, the [Digital Inclusion Team](#) at the City of London and the 'esd-toolkit'. The organisation supports the use of technology, either directly or indirectly, to improve the lives and life chances of people and the places in which they live. Their site provides details of hundreds of projects that use technology to enhance social inclusion and services.

## Devolved administrations: Wales

The [Welsh Assembly Government's Digital Inclusion Unit](#) has responsibility for strategic policy development, inter-governmental activity, and overseeing delivery in digital inclusion, which aims to engage with technologies and address barriers to digital exclusion. The Unit works with institutions to achieve understanding of and openness towards digital inclusion approaches with a view to changing the organisations' policies and practice. The Unit also has the responsibility for drafting a Digital Inclusion Action Plan for Wales.

## Devolved administrations: Scotland

The [Scotland Office](#), headed up by the Secretary of State for Scotland, is part of the Ministry of Justice, based in Whitehall, London. The Office's key roles are to: represent Scotland's interests at Westminster; and act as guardian to the Devolution Settlement. Since the coalition government of 11 May 2010, responsibility for digital inclusion in Scotland has been undertaken by the **Secretary of State for Scotland**, Scotland Office.

## Devolved administrations: Northern Ireland

The [Digital Inclusion Unit](#) of the Department of Finance and Personnel, Northern Ireland Executive, aims to facilitate a digitally inclusive society by increasing skills on and access to low cost, convenient computing and internet technology. The unit is led by the Department of Finance and Personnel, whose strategy comprises steps to:

- ▶ commission surveys to track both the extent of the digital divide and the obstacles to greater use of computing and Internet technologies;
- ▶ commission research to establish the full range across the public, private and community and voluntary sectors, of current and planned initiatives with a digital inclusion element;
- ▶ make available, through phone and the Internet, an information database on all public Internet access points in Northern Ireland;

- ▶ participate in a Digital Inclusion Steering Group consisting of representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors. This group will implement and monitor projects to enable citizens to fully use computers, and the Internet to enhance their efficiency, effectiveness and quality of life;
- ▶ implement a Home Computing Initiative throughout the Northern Ireland Civil Service and the public sector.

## eInclusion Who's Who

Main eInclusion decision-makers and executives

### Minister responsible for eInclusion



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## eInclusion Areas

### Riga Declaration Priorities

#### ICT & Ageing

##### Status in ICT & Ageing

The UK rates above the EU-27 averages on ICT and ageing. The index on regular Internet use for those between 65 and 74 is 0.48, as opposed to an EU-27 average of 0.33 and a maximum of 0.65, according to the European Commission's report on 'Europe's Digital Competitiveness' for 2010.

According to the same report, digital literacy for the age groups between 65 and 74 is at 0.42, as opposed to an EU-27 average of 0.38 and a maximum of 0.65.

##### Actions to support ICT and Ageing

The UK has taken steps towards the digital inclusion of the aged. In March 2005, the government published a strategy report for an ageing society entitled "**Opportunity Age: Meeting the challenges of ageing in the 21st century**". The principle objective of the strategy was to put an end to the perception of older people being dependent, with the emphasis in three areas, namely, work and income, active ageing and services, which are consistent with the European Commission's Action Plan for ageing well in the information society. As a result of the Opportunity Age report, the [Department for Work and Pensions](#) has since initiated a monitoring process on the effect that central and local government strategies on ageing have on the lives of today's and tomorrow's older people. Monitoring is quantitative using **indicators** on the five domains identified in the original report:

- ▶ Independence in Supportive Communities
- ▶ Healthy Active Living
- ▶ Fairness in Work and Later Life
- ▶ Material Well-Being
- ▶ Support and Care.

The new Equality Act 2010 also puts an integrated positive equality duty which extends to all equality groups, including age.

A number of other initiatives have established a strong online presence as well:

- ▶ [Age UK](#) is run by a charity organisation, which, since 2003, has been delivering digital inclusion programmes helping more than 200 000 people experience the benefits of digital inclusion. The Age UK family of sites includes Age Scotland, Age Cymru (Wales) and Age NI (Northern Ireland). Age UK aims to help people enjoy a better later life by providing life-enhancing services and vital support, developing products that are specifically designed for people in later life, providing advice and information through help lines, publications and online services.
- ▶ The **Digital Inclusion Network**, now part of [Age UK](#), forms a support network to more than 170 local voluntary and community organisations delivering digital inclusion programmes to older people. Free resources, grants, training and events are available through the network. **'Connect with IT'** is the charity's dedicated digital inclusion campaign for older people. 'itea and biscuits' week and 'myfriends online' week are the two flagship events providing practical support to older people during the campaign.
- ▶ The **Age OK** accreditation mark is awarded to specific products and services that an expert panel has judged to be sufficiently 'age-friendly'. In order to win the accreditation, the product or service

has to go through a rigorous selection process that seeks to ensure that it has been designed inclusively, factoring in the needs that might pertain to an older person.)

- ▶ NHS [MidLifeCheck](#) is an online health and lifestyle assessment for people aged 45-60, focusing on factors including smoking, healthy eating, alcohol use, physical activity and emotional well-being. It provides a means of 'reaching out' to people who might not otherwise engage with local services, thereby helping to address health inequalities.
- ▶ The [Centre for Policy on Ageing](#), established in 1947 by the Nuffield Foundation, has a long and distinguished record as an independent charity promoting the interests of older people through research, policy analysis and the dissemination of information. The Centre aims to raise awareness of issues around all aspects of ageing and to support good practice. An important and unique aspect of the centre's work is to act as a hub to encourage the creative exchange of thinking and information on ageing issues.

## Geographic Digital Divide

### Status of Common Access to Electronic Content and Services

The index on regular Internet use for those in rural areas is 1.03, as opposed to an EU-27 average of 0.85 and a maximum of 1.39, according to the European Commission's report on 'Europe's Digital Competitiveness' for 2010.

The UK has reached a rate of coverage of 100 % of the population for DSL broadband connections, against an EU-27 average of 94 %, according to the European Commission's report on 'Europe's Digital Competitiveness - Country Profiles' for 2010. This ranks the UK first among all EU-27 countries.

Despite the full DSL coverage, the same report notes that the UK is not among the leading countries in terms of broadband, but for most indicators it scores higher than the EU average. Broadband penetration is just below 30 %. 77 % of households are connected to the Internet and 69 % via broadband. Household penetration raised in 2009. Enterprise broadband connectivity stands at 82 %, slightly below the EU average. Wireless technologies are relatively widespread and above average, with 3G internet penetration on mobile phones more than doubling in 2009.

Even though Internet and broadband use among people aged over 45 remains less than that of younger people, the telecommunications regulator Ofcom has identified that current growth in mobile phone use is being driven by the older generation and that UK citizens tend to spend more on mobile phone services than on fixed-line and broadband communications combined.

### Actions to support Common Access to Electronic Content and Services

The government published the [National Plan for Digital Participation](#) (2010), and committed an additional £ 30 (€ 34) million to the [UK Online Centres](#) and £ 12 (13.6) million to the work of the Consortium for Digital Participation to assist that process.

The **UK online centres network** was set up by government in 2000 to provide public access to computers. It now plays a key role in exploiting information and communication technology (ICT) to help improve individual lives, strengthen communities and achieve social inclusion. There are thousands of UK online centres across the country, contributing towards introducing more and more people to the world of ICT.

The government has also announced a programme to supply a free laptop and a one-year broadband connection to eligible (under certain conditions) low-income families with children.

Furthermore, the '[Race Online 2012](#)' initiative, funded by the government and led by the **Digital Inclusion Champion** aims to bring everyone in the UK online by 2012, with particular emphasis on the four million people who are considered to be socially and economically excluded.

Finally, the success of the '[Everybody Online](#)' programme demonstrates the potential that community based approaches have to engage socially excluded groups. The programme is managed by the national charity '[Citizens Online](#)' who believe participation in the digital world is a basic human right and are committed to promoting digital inclusion. The 'EverybodyOnline' project helps communities and individuals in disadvantaged areas across the UK to engage with digital technology. The aim is to help communities to overcome any barriers they may have to computers and the Internet, so that they can take advantage of the wealth of opportunities the digital technology has to offer.

## eAccessibility

### Status of eAccessibility

The Sitemorse organisation, which regularly conducts surveys of public and corporate organisations, offers the following assessment for the sites of the UK Central Government for the first quarter of 2010:

- ▶ 96.2 % pages passed functional tests
- ▶ 38.5 % pages passed code standards
- ▶ 97.4 % pages have a title
- ▶ **84.1 % pages passed accessibility (level A)**
- ▶ **10.8 % pages passed accessibility (level AA)**
- ▶ Website with most functional failings was [Buying Solutions](#)
- ▶ The poorest code quality was at [Nuclear Decommissioning Authority](#) (NDA) with 38 348 failures
- ▶ Overall the site with the fastest response time was the [Foreign Commonwealth Office \(FCO\) Services](#)
- ▶ 25 sites failed accessibility A & AA on every page.

These findings mean that provision of full accessibility for the UK government sites is a process which is still in progress.

### Actions towards eAccessibility

Cabinet Office Guidelines for UK Government Websites (non mandatory) have been available for a number of years, providing a best practice framework for guidance on the management of UK government websites. They included targets for public web sites of priority AA of version 1 of W3C guidelines.

The most recent guidance document on 'Delivering Inclusive Websites' (October 2009) by the Government's **Central Office of Information** (COI) sets out the minimum standard of accessibility for public sector websites and contains practical guidance on how to achieve this. The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 placed an additional duty on the public sector to promote disability equality in the full range of public sector activity, including procurement, policy-making and service delivery. This duty is in addition to and builds upon the specific duties imposed by the Act to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, which apply to public sector bodies as employers, providers of services and deliverers of public functions.

In particular, the guidance document demands that:

- ▶ The minimum standard of accessibility for all public sector websites is Level Double-A of the [W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#). All new websites must conform to these guidelines from the point of publication.
- ▶ Websites owned by central government departments must have become Double-A conformant since December 2009. This includes websites which have converged, or are to converge on the Directgov or BusinessLink sites.

- ▶ Websites owned by central government executive agencies and non-departmental public bodies have to conform by March 2011.

In order to help fulfil the disability equality duty for web publishing and online service provision, public sector website owners should adopt [best practice in commissioning accessible websites](#), as set out in Publicly Available Specification 78 ([PAS 78](#)), which has already evolved into a draft British Standard, the new [Draft BS 8878](#) on web accessibility, entitled "Building accessible experiences for disabled people - Code of Practice". This is applicable to all public and private organisations wishing to offer accessible, usable websites to their customers. BS 8878 has been designed to introduce accessibility, usability and user experience for disabled people to non-technical professionals, some of whom may be completely new to this subject. It gives guidance on process, rather than on technical and design issues, including recommendations for:

- ▶ involving disabled people in the development process;
- ▶ using automated web accessibility tools to assist with accessibility testing;
- ▶ the management of the guidance and process for upholding existing accessibility guidelines and specifications.

A public consultation is currently in progress on the amendment of the draft standard.

Even though there are no direct legislative or other measures that impose a clear legal requirement on the accessibility of private websites, it appears that web site accessibility of commercial services falls within the scope of the Disability Discrimination Act (and therefore disabled people can make a claim under the Act, if they feel discriminated against because of inaccessibility of a website). Actually, the Code of Practice under [PAS 78](#) cites an airline website, as an example of a relevant service. However, it seems that there is little or no case law on web site accessibility to date; part of the reason for this is the lack of a legal definition of what constitutes an accessible web site.

### Other initiatives

The **Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB)** "See it Right Campaign" provides web accessibility audits and evaluations based on the WAI guidelines and awards the See it Right logo to websites that have undergone the audit process and achieved the required standard. There are also the Mencap Guidelines for web designers, titled "Making your website accessible for people with a learning disability".

Finally, as part of the **Digital Switchover Programme**, the government has set up a Help Scheme aimed at providing practical assistance and support for people aged 75 years and over, and people with significant disabilities. There is also a voluntary industry quality mark called "Digital Tick" which is supposed to denote certain accessibility features.

## Digital Literacy and Competences

### Status on Digital Literacy and Competences

The UK is among the few EU-27 countries (along with Germany, Finland and Denmark), whose most regions (northern Scotland exempted) exhibit above average performance both in the high level and low level digital skills categories.

Digital literacy and competences rate at above EU-27 averages for the 'At-Risk' groups, such as the aged and those in geographically remote areas. The European Commission's 'Europe's Digital Competitiveness' reports for 2010, evaluate the country as follows:

- ▶ The index on 'Digital Literacy by Risk Groups and Country' is at 0.74 for the 'Riga Total-at-Risk Groups', as opposed to a corresponding European (EU-27) average of 0.71 and a maximum of 0.87.
- ▶ An above EU average increase in digital skills was observed between 2007 and 2009, represented by a growth of 0.05, against an EU-27 average of 0.02 and a maximum of 0.12.

Regarding overall literacy, a May 2010 [government-funded research report](#) claims that for the 13-19 year old age group, 22 % are functionally innumerate and for the 16-19 year old age group, 17 % are functionally illiterate.

### Actions towards stimulating Digital Literacy and Competences

#### National Plan for Digital Participation (2010)

A number of actions on digital literacy and skills has been announced as part of the [National Plan for Digital Participation](#) (2010). These, of course, are subject to the plan being implemented by the coalition government of 11th May 2010. These are:

- ▶ The government's '**Home Access Programme**' set to provide free computers and internet connections to 270 000 families with children of school age, along with educational guidance. Home Access is a government drive that helps low-income families lacking access to a computer and/or the Internet to get online at home to support learning. The programme is aimed at those that need it most. Low-income families in receipt of certain benefits could qualify for a Home Access package with Assistive Technology to help children with severe disabilities, or special educational needs which require additional support to access a computer and the Internet.
- ▶ Following the government's commitment in 'Building a Society for All Ages' an extra 20 000 older people in sheltered housing are to be supported to go online by March 2011. Delivered by Digital Unite, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE), the '**Get Digital**' programme is to work with residents, scheme staff and the wider community including local schools, to promote, deliver and sustain digital literacy skills. The scheme was announced as having a £ 2.9 (€ 3.2) million funding.
- ▶ A country-wide scheme (the **PC-Refurbishment scheme**) to provide affordable home access to a high quality refurbished PC, complete with necessary software, content designed to help people develop basic skills and confidence, and support local availability through volunteering networks and other local resources.
- ▶ [Becta](#) (British Educational Communications and Technology Agency), the government agency, which is, however, to be closed by the coalition government.

#### UK Online Centres

The [UK Online Centres](#) are located in areas likely to have the most impact on inequality; they operate in all 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Areas and in 2 000 of the most deprived wards. These centres are in diverse venues ranging from community centres to libraries, colleges and high street cyber-cafes. 95 % of households are within 5 km of a centre and virtually all households in the UK are within 10 kms.

The [UK Online Centres](#) network runs [myguide](#) and [Online basics](#) in order to introduce people to the world of ICT. 'myguide' is a simple web platform designed to make getting online easy and intuitive, developed by the central UK Online Centres' team in consultation with a wide variety of partners. Online basics can be found on myguide as a first-steps course introducing people to the keyboard and mouse, email, searching and internet safety. It was developed in partnership with Becta and the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS). Funding for myguide is provided by the Department for Education.

#### Crisis Skylight centres

The [Crisis Skylight](#) centres are award winning and accredited education, training and employment centres, offer practical and creative workshops in a supportive and inspiring environment together with formal learning opportunities that lead to qualifications and finding work. The centres provide a good learning environment for basic skills training in IT literacy and currently operate in London and Newcastle, with the aim to extend their presence to other major cities in the UK.

## eInclusion and Cultural Diversity

### Status on eInclusion and Cultural Diversity

Following the Riga Dashboard, the 'Index of Regular Internet Use in At-Risk Groups by Country', compiled by the European Commission's 'Europe's Digital Competitiveness Report' (2010), evaluates the UK at 0.79 for the 'Riga Total-at-Risk Groups' as opposed to a corresponding European (EU-27) average of 0.68 and a maximum of 0.88.

### Actions towards eInclusion and Cultural Diversity

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of ethnic or cultural diversity.

#### DC10plus network

The [DC10plus network](#) aims to promote social inclusion through the use of technology. It is a collaborative network of local authorities and their partners dedicated to creating partnerships, sharing best practice and developing new initiatives. During its three years the DC10plus network has been helping local authorities and their service delivery partners to empower people and connect communities through technology and innovation.

#### Knowle West Media Centre

There is a number of initiatives dedicated to social inclusion, such as the [Knowle West Media Centre](#) (which won the best project award at the 2010 UK **eWellbeing awards**), which work with the community to develop the creative, educational and social potential of people within the surrounding area. The centre is committed to social and digital inclusion and works with a wide range of organisations, individuals and artists to produce media content and explore the role of media arts in communities.

## Inclusive eGovernment

### Status on Inclusive eGovernment

The UK has reached a rate of 100 % of online supply of public services for citizens against an EU-27 average of 66 %, according to the European Commission's report on 'Europe's Digital Competitiveness - Country Profiles' for 2010. This, effectively, means that all public services for citizens in the country are online, which ranks the UK first among all EU-27 countries. Despite this, services take-up has not been as high: according to the same report, 35 % of the population use eGovernment services, as opposed to an EU-27 average of 30 %, thus ranking the UK in the 10th position among the EU-27 countries.

According to the latest version of the [benchmarking-based measurement](#) for eGovernment, prepared for the European Commission (2009), the full online availability index for eGovernment services put the country at 100 % (as opposed to an EU-27 average of a little over 70 %), while the online sophistication score for such services was rated at 94 %.

The same report characterised the United Kingdom's websites as **'highly usable'**. They scored particularly well on areas such as 'Usability', 'User Satisfaction Monitoring' and 'One-Stop-Shop Approach'. Accessibility of the national portal and the segmentation of information (according to e.g. target groups and life events) were assessed positively through the 'User-focused Portal Design' metric and a web crawler.

In terms of User Satisfaction Monitoring, the report noted that the United Kingdom is one of the few European countries that engage with stakeholders before actually putting services online. The so-called 'power of information' and 'customer journey mapping' approaches aim to better understand the daily life of users and the impact that service use has on this, in order to design and adapt eGovernment services adequately before their launch.

## Actions towards Inclusive eGovernment

### Directgov portal

The [Directgov](#) portal is the government's digital service for public-facing information and services. As a multi-channel service across web, TV and mobile, Directgov continuously seeks to improve its offer in accordance with customer demand - this includes enabling public access to government services they need, wherever and whenever they want. According to the [National Plan for Digital Participation](#), the number of people who used the Directgov website rose to 27.5 million visits in January 2010, this making it the most visited UK government website. To increase and widen digital engagement, Directgov acts as an enabler offering easy access to public services across its TV and mobile platforms offering services such as 'Find my nearest' UK online centre database across its multi-channel service of web, TV and mobile; and promoting [PassITon](#) and [myguide](#) modules on TV.

Research has shown that Directgov's Mobile and TV service on Sky and Virgin increases reach to those who are both socially and digitally excluded: Viewers of Directgov's interactive television are older (69 % over 35; 47 % over 45), not working (57 %) and not using the Internet frequently (45 % rarely, i.e. less than once a week, or never).

Following the new coalition government of 11 May 2010, the **Efficiency and Reform Group**, chaired by the Minister for the Cabinet Office, has undertaken the ownership of [Directgov](#) and placed its services under review with the aim to increase citizens' engagement.

### UK Online Centres

The [UK Online Centres](#) target the millions of people who are digitally excluded, focusing in particular on those who are at a social disadvantage. The organisation undertakes more detailed marketing research and audience profiling work to establish audience groups, their specific barriers to using technology, motivations, behaviours, influencers, lifestyles and media consumption. This information is used to build national and local marketing campaigns driving footfall to UK online centres and registrations on [myguide](#). Specific target groups included:

- ▶ Skilled manual workers and below social grade (C2DE) families (Actions: 'Get online day', 2008, 'UK online centres campaign', October 2008).
- ▶ C2DE women aged 45 to 55 (Actions: 'Feeling Fine Online', 'UK online centres and myguide' campaign, February 2009).
- ▶ Semi or unskilled workers and below social grade (DE) men and women aged 65 to 75 (Actions: 'It's Never Too Late', 'UK online centres and myguide' campaign, May 2009).
- ▶ C2DE families (Actions: 'Get online day', 2009, 'UK online centres and myguide' campaign, October 2009).

Campaign messages were tailored to each audience, and centres were provided with materials and toolkits to piggy-back on the national theme with their own local marketing. The UK online centres support people in 82 % of the areas of highest deprivation, and around two million UK online centre visitors walk through their doors per annum. In a recent campaign, 'It's Never Too Late', there were 6 500 calls to the helpline with people looking for their nearest centre, 27 000 centre searches on the website, 6 000 launches of the special 'It's Never Too Late' game/course on myguide, and an estimated 10 000 visitors walked through UK online centre doors in the four campaign weeks.

Profiling of UK online centre and myguide users reveals that the centres and courses are reaching the right audiences. Currently:

- ▶ Half of UK online centres customers have no formal qualifications
- ▶ 55 % of myguide users are over 55, and 32 % are over 65
- ▶ 74 % of people who use the centres are socially excluded
- ▶ 60 % of people receive some state benefit
- ▶ 50 % of users do not own their own home

- ▶ One third of users consider themselves to have a disability or mental health issues
- ▶ One quarter of centre users are from Non British ethnic backgrounds
- ▶ 93 % of visitors access online government services in a UK online centre
- ▶ 64 % of customers progress to take up further education, IAG opportunities or employment
- ▶ 96 % of people who use the centres rate the service as good to excellent.

Finally, the UK online centres have been working with Directgov to see how the UK online centres network can help people to use the site even more effectively, and to collect data about how easy new internet users find its services. In the initial application in 2009, 900 people were supported to use the website by eight centres and nearly 200 of them completed a survey about it. The majority of users found Directgov very helpful, but needed a helping hand to really get to grips with it. Afterwards, more than 90 % said they would use it again, and 90 % said they would recommend it to a friend. Discussions on how to extend the project are currently underway.

# The Future of eInclusion

## Research in Practice & Future Challenges

### Research in Practice

The [Seventh Framework Programme](#) (FP7) comprises, under its umbrella, EU research initiatives that play a vital part in attaining the objectives of growth, competitiveness and employment. The broad objectives of FP7 have been grouped into four categories: [Cooperation](#), [Ideas](#), [People](#) and [Capacities](#). eInclusion aspects hold a prominent place in this programme, which has been operational since 2007 and will expire in 2013.

Approximately € 400 million have been allocated to FP7's [Challenge 7: 'ICT for Independent Living, Inclusion and Governance'](#), one of the seven 'Challenges' of the [ICT Work Programme](#) 2009 – 2010 under FP7. The aim of 'Challenge 7' is to create ICT products, through research and development, which will foster independent and active living among Europe's ageing population, improving living standards and mitigating ICT complexity in order to encourage groups with special needs to uptake and use ICT tools and technologies to their benefit.

'Challenge 7' set three objectives:

Objective ICT-2009.7.1: [ICT & Ageing](#)

- ▶ Service robotics for ageing well
- ▶ Open Systems Reference Architectures, Standards and ICT Platforms for Ageing Well
- ▶ RTD roadmaps and stakeholder coordination.

Objective ICT-2009.7.2: [Accessible and Assistive ICT](#)

- ▶ Embedded Accessibility of Future ICT
- ▶ ICT restoring and augmenting human capabilities compensating for people with reduced motor functions or disabilities
- ▶ RTD research agendas & coordination of constituencies.

Objective ICT-2009.7.3: [ICT for Governance and Policy Modelling](#)

- ▶ Governance and Participation Toolbox
- ▶ Policy Modelling, Simulation and Visualisation
- ▶ Roadmapping and Networking for 'participation, governance and policy modelling'.

The United Kingdom is involved in the following FP7 projects:

1. [Social software for inclusion of \(marginalized\) young people](#) (INCLUSO)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-09-01]

2. [Online mobile communities to facilitate the social inclusion of young marginalized people](#) (COMELN)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-09-01]

**Project web site:** <http://www.comein-project.eu>

3. [Self mobility improvement in the elderly by counteracting falls](#) (SMILING)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

**Project web site:** <http://www.smilingproject.eu/>

4. [Gaming technology platform for social reintegration of marginalised youth](#) (REPLAY)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-07-01]

5. [Vital mind](#) (VM)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

6. [Integrated cognitive assistive and domotic companion robotic systems for ability and security](#) (COMPANIONABLE)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

7. [BCIs with rapid automated interfaces for nonexperts](#) (BRAIN)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-09-01]

8. [Tools for brain-computer interaction](#) (TOBI)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-11-01]

9. [Open architecture for accessible services integration and standardisation](#) (OASIS)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

10. [Open accessibility everywhere: groundwork, infrastructure, standards](#) (AEGIS)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-09-01]

11. [Usability of music for social inclusion of children](#) (UMSIC)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-09-01]

12. [Haptic, audio and visual interfaces for maps and location-based services](#) (HAPTIMAP)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-09-01]

13. [Helping autism diagnosed young people navigate and develop socially](#) (HANDS)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.2 Accessible and inclusive ICT

**Project start date:** [2008-06-01]

14. [International support of a common awareness and knowledge platform for studying and enabling independent living](#) (CAPSIL)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-07]

15. [European ambient assisted living innovation alliance](#) (AALLIANCE)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

16. [Extending professional active life](#) (EPAL)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-02-01]

17. [Social ethical and privacy needs in ICT for older people: A dialogue roadmap](#) (SENIOR)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

18. [HERMES - Cognitive care and guidance for active aging](#) (HERMES)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

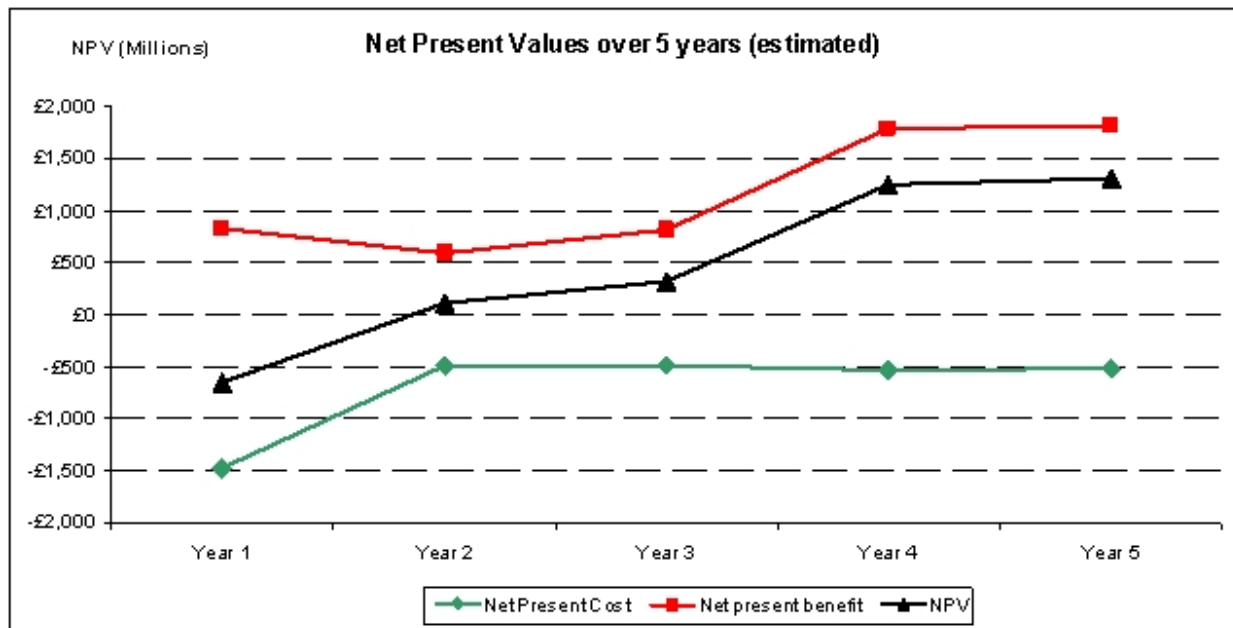
## National projects

### [Digital engagement network](#)

This network is for connections, conversations and plans for action around the UK digital engagement agenda. New members and projects are welcome and all blog posts and membership are moderated (to prevent spam). Sign-up for the network is free and contact is available with others who have attended or are interested in [NDI10](#) - the National Digital Inclusion Conference for 2010.

### [Developing a Methodology for Costing the Impact of Digital Exclusion](#)

If provided effectively, online access has definitely economic advantages for the citizen and for the government, especially if illiteracy and innumeracy can be overcome. [Recent research](#) from the LSE Public Policy Group, entitled 'Developing a Methodology for Costing the Impact of Digital Exclusion', also using data from the 2009 [Oxford Internet Survey](#), estimated that giving internet access to those with the deepest level of digital exclusion (about 4-6 million people) would generate benefits of at least £ 3.8 (€ 4.3) billion for citizens, and in addition nearly £ 2.8 (€ 3.1) billion to the economy at large. The study calculated that it would cost nearly £ 3.3 (€ 3.7) billion over 5 years to put nearly 6 million people online, and so using a cost-benefit calculation over 5 years, there would be a net benefit of £ 2.3 (€ 2.6) billion, as the graph below shows:



Digital inclusion research consortium

The [UK Online Centres](#) are part of a research consortium which has met several times to discuss their latest findings and examine the current gaps in information and understanding. Contributors included Ofcom, Newcastle University, the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce ([RSA](#)), Freshminds and members of the (then) government’s Digital Inclusion Team. By continuing to share information the group hopes to avoid duplication, gain peer review input, and extend the knowledge base at the core of digital inclusion projects and policies. Some of the key pieces of research from recent months are listed and linked below:

- ▶ [Oxford Internet Survey \(OxIS\) 2009](#), research designed to offer detailed insights into the influence of the Internet on everyday life in the UK.
- ▶ [Office for National Statistics – Internet Access Survey 2008](#), a report which shows information about both households with home access to the Internet and individuals’ use of the Internet.

[South Bristol Digital Neighbourhoods](#)

The project aims to help in the regeneration of the South Bristol area and is headed by the [‘Citizens Online’](#) charity organisation.

Working with a wide range of local partners including [‘Bristol City Council’](#), [‘Knowle West Media Centre’](#) and the [‘DC10plus’](#) digital challenge finalists [‘Connecting Bristol’](#), the **‘South Bristol Digital Neighbourhoods’ Programme (SBDN)** aims to bring economic, social & environmental benefits of increased digital access and innovation to South Bristol. The programme will work with the public, voluntary and commercial sectors to engage the local community in creating a local ‘Digital Footprint’ shaped by the talents, creativity, experience and assets that the community has to offer.

South Bristol has below average levels of connectivity and uptake of digital technologies. While demographics vary considerably, some areas score highly on the national indices of deprivation. In particular, South Bristol has high levels of disability benefit claimants, who potentially have much to gain from digital inclusion, and have some of the lowest levels of digital uptake. With low levels of employment and limited local employment opportunities, the community has much to gain from the digital economy and the flexible working that it enables.

The vision of the SBDN programme is to create a state-of-the-art digital community, where a thriving digital economy is driven by a digitally-skilled community. Project themes will focus on developing

internet access through high capacity internet connections, embedding ICT and digital media skills into the community, implementing strategies to provide flexible employment opportunities and enhance service delivery through the use of ICT, promote and support ground up community participation and provide a healthy, positive living environment through green ICT initiatives.

Examples of some of the activities that the programme aims to provide in order to support these themes include: internet learning activities and higher digital skills workshops; eDemocracy workshops; training and digital mentoring opportunities; workshops to help businesses; and, activities to help community groups and service providers to make the most of digital opportunities.

### [Inclusion through the Digital Economy](#)

This is a long-term project run by the **Digital Economy Research Hub**, which aims to tackle social exclusion by making it easier for people to access the life-changing benefits offered by digital technologies. The £ 12 (€ 13.6) million Hub is based at [Newcastle University](#) and is a key element of the Research Councils UK Digital Economy research programme. The Hub brings together leading researchers from fields spanning computer science, transport, sociology, design, business and digital media.

The project, in which the [University of Dundee](#) will also play a key role, will address four fields where digital technologies and the building of a truly inclusive digital economy could deliver major social benefits: Connected Home & Community; Accessibility; Inclusive Transport Services; and, Creative Industries.

The researchers will be working closely with people who are affected by social exclusion. The team will work with a group of 3 000 volunteers from the Dundee and Newcastle areas, including people from a range of age groups and with a variety of disabilities. In the North East, a large panel of older people recruited and supported by Years Ahead, the Regional Forum on Ageing, which is a key partner in the Hub, will be involved.

### [Digital Participation Research](#)

This programme of work – which is part of a wider body of work supported by [Becta](#) (British Educational Communications and Technology Agency) to contribute to their 'Harnessing Technology' strategy – will be informed by emerging research and thinking on digital literacy and participation, and will additionally contribute to the field by closely working with practising educators, experts and children to devise, pilot, and review practical classroom approaches.

The research programme performed by [Futurelab](#), an independent not-for-profit organisation dedicated to transforming teaching and learning, will produce guidance for teachers informed by evidence, as well as policy recommendations for the development of **digital literacy in primary and secondary schools**. It will respond to curricular reform at key stage 3, as well as to the skills agenda and to the findings and recommendations of the Rose Review of the Primary Curriculum. The major outcomes of the project will be two series of specific user scenarios—based on evidence collected throughout—for developing digital literacy approaches in particular school subjects and cross-curricular schemes, plus a handbook for teachers detailing approaches to digital literacy and offering further guidance. Activities envisaged are, as follows:

- ▶ conduct a comprehensive desk review of digital literacy and digital participation research and its practical implications in the context of primary and secondary curriculum reforms;
- ▶ develop a series of participatory workshops with teachers to design practical approaches to digital literacy and participation in the primary and secondary school curriculum;
- ▶ co-develop classroom strategies for digital literacy and participation with teachers and learners, to pilot these approaches, and to analyse and report the outcomes;
- ▶ develop a series of case study exemplars of digital literacy and participation approaches in primary and secondary school classrooms.

## Future Challenges

The future eInclusion challenge for the UK is epitomised in the first paragraphs of the July 2010 [Manifesto for a Networked Nation](#):

"The UK has 40 million internet users, with 30 million people using the web every day, and it has some of the world's cheapest broadband prices. Seven million of us have sold an item on eBay. Half of all leisure travel is now booked online and seven million job adverts were placed online last year.

**However, there are 10 million adults in the UK who have never used the internet: more than a fifth of the population. Four million of those are among the most disadvantaged: 39 % are over 65, 38 % are unemployed and 19 % are families with children."**

The UK Government's focus is on encouraging as many people as possible to go online and improve the convenience and efficiency of public services by driving online delivery. Together, they provide a rallying cry to create a truly networked nation – a chance to make the UK one of the first developed countries in the world to achieve near-total internet use by 2012.

On a more general note, commentary by a [London School of Economics](#) policy expert, notes that "the UK faces a tough challenge in getting millions of people online. Online engagement, especially for the most marginalised groups will not be achieved if government goes about it in a piecemeal fashion. And as online access becomes more and more crucial to modern industrial developments, especially 'cloud computing' and new control technologies, the UK risks paying a high price indeed if firms and customers gain access to 'real broadband' only many years behind the country's leading overseas competitors."

## **European Commission - eInclusion Practice**

eInclusion practice ([epractice.eu](http://epractice.eu)) is an information and exchange service for European professionals.

The eInclusion factsheets are one of the [epractice.eu](http://epractice.eu) services. The factsheets present an overview of the eInclusion status and progress in the European countries.

The eInclusion factsheets are produced and updated once a year.

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