Press release

FOR RELEASE: 8 June 2021, 8AM

Technology industry 'Fast Forward for Digital Jobs' Taskforce leads call for inclusive economic recovery through digital skills

- *Report outlines critical role of digital skills in a post-COVID-19 inclusive economy*

- *Three million new jobs requiring digital skills projected to be created in the UK by 2025*

- *Tech companies propose new pathways for digital jobs across the UK*

LONDON 8 June 2021: A taskforce of some of the world's biggest tech firms and UK national businesses, including Google, Microsoft and Amazon Web Services, has today called for major overhaul of the UK's adult education system.

The *Fast Forward for Digital Jobs* Taskforce, convened by technology trade organisation techUK and including blue chip firms BT, Salesforce and Cisco, as well as FDM Group and UKFast, is calling on the Government to ensure industry certifications are eligible for support under the new Lifetime Skills Guarantee.

The Fast Forward for Digital Jobs report highlights the significant discrepancy between the upsurge in demand for digitally skilled workers in areas such as coding and the opportunity to retrain in these fields for the many millions made redundant due to the COVID-19 recession.

The report stresses the need to take immediate action to close the growing digital skills gap with thousands of digital job vacancies remaining unfilled[1], even in the current job market. This comes as recent projections suggest a further three million new jobs[2] that will require digital skills will be created in the UK by 2025.

While recent UK Government initiatives show an understanding of the importance of digital skills, the UK does not yet have the infrastructure and resources to meet this challenge

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[1] https://technation.io/jobs-and-skills-report/
[2]
https://msit.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiZWMyNjA0YzAtZGY4Zi00MTI1LTk4MjQtNWI1NTA5NDY1MzRjIiwidCI6IjcyZjk4OGJmLTg2ZjEtNDFhZi05MWFiLTJkN2NkMDExZGI0NyIsImMiOjV9

alone. The Taskforce is calling for the Government to work with tech firms to open up new pathways for all people to access digital skills certifications with a proven track record on employability, supporting individuals from all backgrounds to succeed in digital jobs.

The report outlines seven key recommendations under three headings for Government and the technology industry:

Supporting learners
1. **Showcase the life changing opportunities of digital skills and jobs** – highlighting the diversity and effectiveness of pathways and jobs available to all.
2. **Champion bite-sized flexible learning** as a flexible, affordable and effective route for learners to acquire productive digital skills that are valued by employers.
3. **Help learners meet the cost of retraining** – extend financial assistance similar to The Lifelong Loan Entitlement and Lifetime Skills Guarantee for a culture and system of lifelong learning.

Supporting employers
4. **Help SMEs to invest in digital reskilling** through a Digital Skills Tax Credit
5. **Enable more SMEs to benefit from the Apprenticeship Levy -** including increasing the percentage of unspent funds from levy-payers that can be transferred to smaller companies.
6. **Ensure education providers focus on job readiness** – create partnerships between employers and educators to ensure programmes focus on the skill sets those employers need.

Delivering change at scale
7. **Develop an online 'Digital Skills Toolkit 2.0' to help people navigate to digital skills and careers** - Building on the success of the Skills Toolkit, an end-to-end 'Digital Skills Toolkit 2.0' would make digital opportunities and pathways more transparent and accessible to more people.

Jacqueline de Rojas, President of **techUK,** commented:

"The pandemic is having a dramatic impact on people's lives – with almost two-thirds of those who have lost their jobs as a result of the pandemic under the age of 25, there is a real fear the generations to come will suffer the economic impacts. Employers in the technology sector have come together on the Fast Forward for Digital Jobs Taskforce to support next generation employment.

"We know digital skills are a key part of living and working online but not everyone has access to the training which will equip them with employable digital skills. This report outlines new ways industry and government can collaborate to provide all people across the UK with the skills they need to prepare them for what comes next."

Minister for Apprenticeships and Skills Gillian Keegan said:

"We're transforming technical education so that everyone has the opportunity to get the skills they need to succeed and putting employers at the heart of plans so that businesses have access to the highly skilled workforce they need to thrive.

"From our digital entitlement, which enables adults with no or low digital skills to undertake improved basic skills qualifications for free, to the Skills Toolkit, which offers a range of free digital skills courses from AI to cloud computing, we are supporting people to get the digital skills they need to progress. Through our digital Skills Bootcamps, Free Courses for Jobs and our apprenticeship incentives, we are supporting people to get the skills they need to get good jobs at any age."

Ronan Harris, **Google**, Vice President and Managing Director UK & Ireland, said:

"Online tools have proven to be a lifeline during the lockdown and they can help create a digital, sustainable and inclusive recovery. Ensuring people have the right digital skills, such as with [Google Digital Career Certificates](#), is an important part of creating opportunity across the UK. This report provides new insight on the ways businesses, charities and the Government can work even more closely together to reach more people and help equip them with the skills of tomorrow." Ronan Harris, Google UK&I MD.

Ian Brown, **UKFast**, CEO, said:

"The pandemic has wreaked havoc on our economy - one in 20 people who want a job can't find one. We know there are huge opportunities available in digital but people need the skills to access them. If we don't seize this opportunity to retrain those hit hardest we risk locking them out of good work now and in the future."

Clare Barclay, **Microsoft**, Chief Executive Officer UK, said:

"Growing the depth and breadth of digital skills across the UK is critical to building a truly inclusive economic recovery. The recommendations of the Fast Forward for Digital Jobs Taskforce Report are an important step to achieving this. With the collective power of the tech industry providing better access to training and qualifications, we will help people, no matter their age, previous education, or experience, connect to jobs of the future and equip them with the skills needed to thrive in the digital economy."

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors

The members of the Digital Skills Taskforce are: Jacqueline de Rojas CBE – **techUK**, President, Chair of the techUK Digital Skills Taskforce; Wendy James – **BT**, Leadership, Learning, Talent and Diversity Director; Adam Spearing – **Salesforce**, EMEA Field CTO and SVP Solution Consulting UKI; Ronan Harris – **Google**, Vice President and Managing Director UK and Ireland; David Meads – **Cisco**, Chief Executive UK and Ireland; Clare Barclay – **Microsoft**, Chief Executive Officer UK; Darren Hardman – **AWS**, General Manager UK and