

Dear Mayor Khan and team

A City for all Londoners: Response from Good Things Foundation

Thank you for the opportunity to response to your vision for London, 'A City for all Londoners.'

I'm the Chief Executive of Good Things Foundation, the UK's largest digital inclusion charity. Since 2010 we've supported more than 2 million adults to develop basic digital skills through a network of 5,000 local partners - including libraries, charities, and community organisations - of which 553 are based in London.

Earlier this month I attended your conference on social integration, where I had the opportunity to discuss digital and social inclusion with the Deputy Mayor for Social Integration, Social Mobility and Community Engagement, Matthew Ryder.

I share your concerns that "London is too unequal" and that "too many are at risk of being excluded from its economic life"; I too want "to build a London where no community feels left behind and where everyone has the opportunities they need to fulfill their potential."

There are two areas I would like to highlight in this response:

1. The central role that digital literacy - having the basic skills to use computers and the internet confidently - can play in achieving A City for all Londoners and supporting better social integration: this was not explored in your vision and is a missed opportunity
2. In line with the [Casey Review into opportunity and integration](#), the importance of innovative approaches to learning English: our online English language platform developed with the BBC and British Council - [English My Way](#) - is a free resource which could dramatically increase the accessibility of ESOL provision and enable all Londoners to play a stronger role in community and city life.

I have outlined these points in more detail below.

1. The central role that digital literacy can play in achieving A City for all Londoners

A line that really struck me in your vision was: "we must make sure that we plan for social infrastructure just as we plan for physical infrastructure."

Digital literacy is a key enabler across all elements of today's social and economic infrastructure. However, 12.6 million people in the UK still lack the five basic digital skills - that's around 19% of the population. 5.3 million say they've never been online. And 25% of disabled adults have never used the internet.

The digitally excluded cannot do what most of us take for granted, like shopping online, communicating with friends and relatives using email and social media, and managing their money online. In today's world, this is simply not acceptable.

1 in 10 people surveyed today say they don't intend to go online. And 50% of these say this is because they're not motivated to use the internet. They don't see the point. Having the right skills and access to broadband is also a factor, but digital confidence is the biggest issue by far.

And unsurprisingly, there's a strong overlap between digital exclusion and social exclusion in all its forms. People without digital skills are more likely to be unemployed, earn less than £9,500, be older and have poor health.

Good Things Foundation is a charity working to drive social change through digital. Helping people become digitally capable drives a whole range of other benefits, from employment to wellbeing. A report commissioned from CEBR in 2015 found that the economic benefit would be almost £10 for every £1 invested; and 92% of the people Good Things Foundation has helped say they have improved their lives. But beyond that, digital confidence and skills drives digital places. And digital places are more likely to thrive and grow.

As Mayor of London, you have a golden opportunity to do something about this. As announced in the Autumn Statement, from 2019, the Adult Education Budget – previously run by the Skills Funding Agency – will be devolved to London.

In London, 860,000 adults have never used the internet, or make only limited use of it. The cost of eradicating digital exclusion in London by training all adults in basic digital skills, based on Good Things Foundation's average training cost, is £12.9m. This would drive wider benefits - many of which are part of the London vision - from tackling health inequalities to supporting small businesses. A 100% digitally included London will increase the prevalence of home working, reducing the burden on the London transport system. It will also create a pipeline of people who can progress to careers in the digital and technology skills sector, supporting your Digital Talent programme for young people.

Good Things Foundation has for fifteen years been the Government's main provider of basic digital skills. Our programmes are embedded into communities and delivered by people who know how to help other people. We're also now helping local councils up and down the country to drive forward on digital inclusion, recognising the massive benefits it unlocks across economic development and social inclusion.

We have skills in building co-ordinated networks; within our network of local partners we run nine specialist networks for: social housing, ESOL, rural, health, home access to the internet, employability, disabled people, older people and carers. Our model has three core strands:

1. *Local*: Working with 5,000 local partners and 25,000 volunteers, so that excluded offline people get the support they need in a local, familiar and trusted environment.
2. *Digital*: The model not only helps people to learn to use the internet, but also uses digital technology to deliver - through mass online learning, digital management systems, shared data, and the use of email, webinars and social media to lead and inspire local partners.
3. *Scale*: Scaling up successful local practice, amplifying it with clear focus, exceptional products, and collective vision; and delivering economies of scale. Thousands of local partners work with Good Things Foundation to impact on millions of lives.

The Government has, to its credit recognised there is a problem, and the current Digital Economy Bill contains a proposed legal entitlement to basic digital skills training for all adults. When your devolution deal for adult skills is agreed, we would urge you to embrace this entitlement, and go even further. Opening up the funding to community-based delivery would ensure it reaches the people and places Further Education by itself can't reach; and building digital inclusion into all of

London's services and programmes would put London firmly on the map as a digital city of the future.

2. The importance of innovative approaches to learning English

Linked to the above, another benefit of digital technology is its ability to open up formal and informal learning to a wide range of people. I know that the integration of BAME groups in London is a key priority and that evidence also shows that acquiring English language skills can assist the settlement of migrants. This in turn can ensure that everyone can play an active and dynamic role in London's growth.

The Casey Review, published on 5 December 2016, places a high priority on the acquisition of English language skills as one of the keys to better social integration and social mobility. In Newham, 11.1% of women are not proficient in English, with a similar proportion in other London boroughs including Tower Hamlets and Brent. As well as recommending greater government investment in community ESOL provision through central government and local authorities (via the adult skills budget), the review also noted that "greater digital awareness may also be a protective factor in improving knowledge, understanding and access to public services" and recommends investment in improving IT literacy for parents in segregated areas.

However, in recent years, funding for ESOL provision through the adult skills budget has decreased, with an adverse impact on individuals and communities. We therefore need to look to low-cost, innovative and scaleable solutions.

For the last two years, Good Things Foundation has led a community-based English language project, called English My Way, in partnership with the BBC and British Council, to support adults with no or low levels of English language skills.

The project provides pre-entry level ESOL skills through a structured 24-week blended learning programme, improving English language skills to help people better integrate with their local communities. Funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government, this fresh approach to English language learning combines tutor-led sessions, rich multimedia online learning, and volunteer-supported 'Learning Circles.'

English My Way has reached people with the lowest levels of English language skills, especially women, working in areas of England with high demand for English language support. The programme is currently delivered in 58 areas of the highest language within England, 23 of which are in London. During the first two years of the programme:

- 9,172 learners benefited from ESOL learning
- 70% of learners progressed to an Entry Level 1 ESOL course.

The [English My Way](#) website was developed as the online home of the ESOL learning programme, making flexible tutor resources and session plans available completely free. I'd love to talk to your team about how we can ensure this free resource is used as widely as possible - for example, through a London-wide awareness raising campaign.

Good Things Foundation is excited to contribute to the delivery of your vision and I would like to offer my advice and support in accelerating the realisation of your goals through digital technology.

Yours sincerely

Helen Milner, Chief Executive, Good Things Foundation
07901716146 / helen@goodthingsfoundation.org

Annex 1: Case Study**Mercy Foundation, Wandsworth**

Victoria Rodney grew up in Lagos, Nigeria with very little, and promised herself that her children would have more than she did - particularly in terms of their education. As an adult she settled in London, as her children grew up she made Friday night homework night at her house, and made sure she was supporting their schoolwork. Soon both teachers and her children's friends were noticing the difference, and friends started coming home on a Friday night to get Victoria's help too.

With support from the school, some old textbooks and her home computer, homework night soon became homework club, and Victoria found her house becoming more of a youth hostel. Pretty soon the parents wanted to see what was going on as well, because many didn't have English as a first language and didn't know anything about IT. The Mercy Foundation began to take shape, and Victoria's house was no longer big enough to house everyone who wanted to learn. In response, Victoria re-mortgaged it, and moved Mercy Foundation to a building in Wandsworth. She spent the money on refurbishment and more computers, and became an online centre.

The homework club is still going strong with more than 125 kids attending each week, plus parents and locals wanting support with IT skills, job hunting, English as a second language and much more. Four years on and there are now six volunteers helping Victoria, and the centre has become something of a hub bringing together Christian and Muslim communities. Their philosophy - as ever - is to help anyone that needs them, especially local children and their families.

New skills for Tower Hamlets mum



Originally from South Africa, Bernadine has lived in the UK for 13 years and is a tenant with Circle Housing Association in London's Tower Hamlets. Before she began her learning journey with Circle Housing Old Ford, she had a few digital skills, but knew that to get back into work she'd need a lot more. She says: "A long time ago I knew a little bit about IT, but it was all still very new then and I never got round to developing those skills any further."

A couple of years ago, when her sons were a bit older and had started going to playgroup, she decided that the time had come to start improving her career prospects. "I saw the IT classes at Eastside Youth Centre which were run by Circle Housing Old Ford," explains Bernadine. "We used to get leaflets through our door - and I noticed that the classes were really close to where I live, which was especially helpful for me. It meant I could fit it around dropping off and picking up the kids."

"I thought it would be good to go along both to help me find a job but also to meet new people. I don't think a lot of people realise that going to classes helps you to get out and socialise! I also thought it was brilliant that they offer the classes for free - it really was an opportunity that I couldn't pass up, because I just wasn't sure what I wanted to do career-wise."

"Once I started attending the classes I really enjoyed it! My tutor, Sheniz, is really nice and friendly and the environment is so easy to learn in. I was being taught all kinds of different stuff and I enjoyed it so much that I thought the right path for me would be to try and get an administration-type job where I can use my new skills."

As part of the Circle Housing Old Ford IT Training programme, Bernadine completed all of the courses on Good Things Foundation's online learning platform, Learn My Way. After that she progressed to the OCR Level 1 IT User Certificate courses, which are designed to teach learners the basic transferable skills necessary for the modern workplace.

Bernadine says: "I put my name down for the qualification - it was recommended to me by the Circle Housing team. Before coming to the IT classes I don't think I'd have had the confidence to do the course, but Sheniz always encourages me - she sings my praises and tells me that I'm doing really good. It's so nice to get positive feedback and encouragement and that gave me the confidence to do it."

The qualification helped Bernadine to refresh her basic IT skills, and covered things like spreadsheets, making presentations and sending emails. Once she'd achieved her OCR Level 1 certificate, Bernadine moved onto to the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). She says: "Sheniz encouraged me to do the ECDL, which covered all the same things as the first course but



was a bit more advanced. I was so pleased when I achieved the certification, and it looks great on my CV!"

After developing her skills and gaining her certifications, Bernadine did a three-month voluntary work placement with Circle Housing Old Ford's community development and customer service teams, before securing an apprenticeship at another housing association as a Monitoring Assistant.

Bernadine says: "I did my volunteering and that was really good experience and very helpful for preparing myself for going back to work. It was a real confidence-builder! I achieved the apprenticeship and I was delighted because it was such a good opportunity.

"This whole learning journey has made me feel great because I've been able to achieve so much - everything is contributing to where I want to be. Because potential employers want people with experience and, of course, with IT skills, I think everything I've done will help me secure permanent employment.

"I'm using my digital skills to look for jobs online at the moment. I'd definitely recommend getting online to others who are looking for work. It just makes everything so much easier!"