



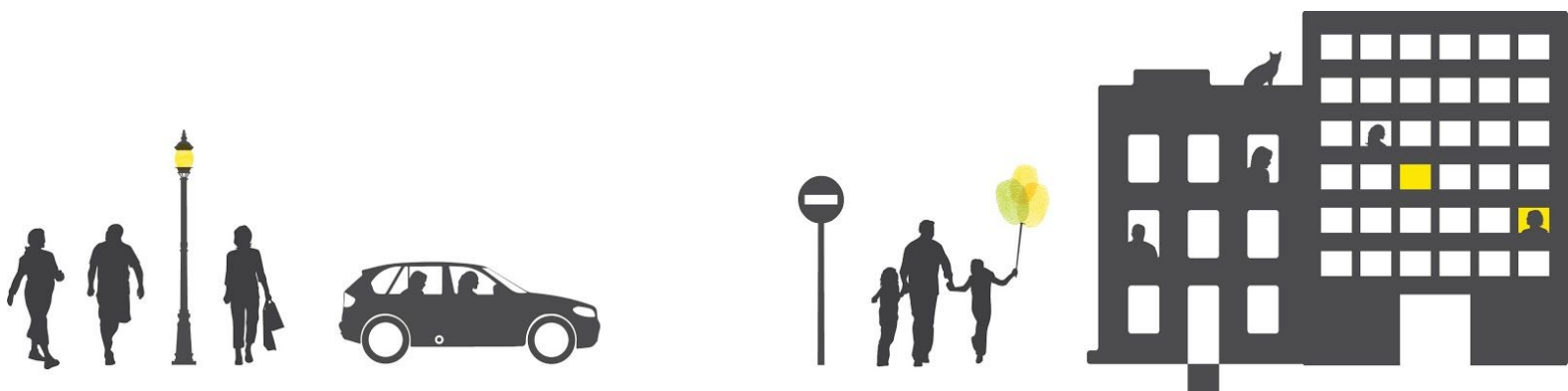
HM Revenue
& Customs



HMRC Digital Inclusion Pilot

Pilot Findings: September 2015 - April 2016

April 2016



Pilot overview

HMRC have invested £680,000 in 2015-16 through the **HMRC Digital Inclusion Pilot** to enhance HMRC service provision and outcomes for HMRC customers through joining up with, and adding value to, the Future Digital Inclusion (FDI) programme funded by the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and managed by Tinder Foundation. The objectives of the HMRC Digital Inclusion Pilot were to:

- **Train 45,333 individuals, at a cost per person of £15, to develop the basic digital skills required to use the internet confidently and independently, enabling them to access HMRC information and services online.**
- **Train 330 HMRC staff to become Digital Ambassadors, through an agile 'test and learn' pilot, in order to raise the digital skills of HMRC colleagues to Level 7 or above on the Government's digital inclusion (GDS) scale.**

The target audience is existing or potential HMRC customers, with a focus on socially and digitally excluded individuals who are often the heaviest users of government services. To achieve these objectives, the Digital Inclusion Pilot focused on bringing together two strands of digital inclusion activity:

1. **Providing tailored support to increase the digital skills and confidence of existing or potential HMRC customers, through 70 UK online centres in five regions.** This activity was delivered through a blend of informal face-to-face support and online digital skills training through Tinder Foundation's e-learning platform, Learn My Way (www.learnmyway.com). Activity focused on the five English regions with the highest level of digital exclusion¹: the West Midlands, North East, East Midlands, Yorkshire & Humber and North West (see Annex 1, Figure 1).
2. **Creating an HMRC Digital Ambassador agile 'test and learn pilot', delivered in partnership between HMRC and Tinder Foundation.** This project aimed to recruit and train 330 HMRC staff as Digital Ambassadors. Their role is to inspire and train other HMRC colleagues in digital skills, raising the level of digital skills and engagement amongst HMRC staff to Level 7 or above on the GDS digital inclusion scale.² As well as increasing HMRC productivity, this will help HMRC staff to deliver better digital services to customers.

Tailored digital skills support for HMRC customers

The national network of UK online centres managed by Tinder Foundation supports 250,000 people each year to develop basic digital skills through a combination of online learning and community support. This support already includes help for those who need to use government services online, both by building their confidence, motivation and skills to do so, and also by providing assisted digital support for those who face specific barriers such as visual or other impairments.

Through the HMRC Digital Inclusion Pilot, Tinder Foundation has worked with HMRC to:

¹ As identified by [ONS data](#) (2014)

² Level 7 represents the level of basic digital skills and capabilities required to be able to navigate online independently and perform all tasks at a basic level. Government Digital Service, 'Government Digital Inclusion Strategy', 2014. Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy#annex-2-digital-inclusion-scale-for-individuals>



- Recruit and fund 70 UK online centres across five regions to reach existing and potential HMRC customers and train them to develop basic digital skills and confidence.
- Develop a blended training programme in basic digital skills on Tinder Foundation's e-learning platform, Learn My Way, including two dedicated HMRC landing pages: [Benefits & Tax](#) and [Child Benefit & Tax Credit](#).
- Develop and implement a robust evaluation framework including individual baseline and 3 month progression surveys, telephone and face-to-face interviews and qualitative learner case studies. This framework enables Tinder Foundation to measure:
 - the increase in individuals' digital skills;
 - the increase in individuals' confidence in internet use, driving their capability in using the internet for a variety of functions including online government services;
 - 'channel shift': the number of individuals who have started using government services online rather than telephone and face-to-face;
 - the increase in individuals' ability and likelihood to channel shift;
 - the wider social and economic benefits of increased digital skills.

As a result, between September 2015 and March 2016, the pilot activity has supported **45,401 people to learn basic digital skills**, exceeding the expected delivery target of 45,333 people trained for the project. If the learner data is segmented, we find that **74% of learners who had never accessed government services online have now accessed government services online for the first time.**³

The blended training programme developed by Tinder Foundation and HMRC uses the UK online centre delivery model, which has been proven as a strong, cost-effective model for digital inclusion.

- In November 2015, an independent research report commissioned from Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) by Tinder Foundation and Go ON UK found that if support of the type delivered through the UK online centre network was provided to ensure all UK citizens had basic digital skills, **the economic benefits to individuals and society (including increased productivity) would contribute over £14 billion to the UK economy by 2025**⁴.
- Following this, a second independent study, led by Just Economics calculated the SROI (Social Return on Investment) of the UK online centre model, producing an SROI of 1:5 - ie. **for every £1 invested, there is a positive return of £5.**
- Separating out just the positive return for Government, the SROI is 1:1.5. This means that for every £1 HMRC invests in the training programme, the Government generates £1.50 in positive value. For the HMRC Digital Inclusion Pilot, this equates to a **£680,000 investment generating a £1,020,000 return in positive value.**⁵

See Figure 2 in Annex 2: SROI Theory of Change for financial benefit to government of digital skills training. The model shows the causation between UK online centre support to develop skills to interact with HMRC services and benefits to the Government.

Digital Ambassadors test and learn pilot

³ UK online centres learner progression survey data, Q2-Q3 2015-16. Data tables available on request.

⁴ Cebr "The economic impact of Basic Digital Skills and inclusion in the UK" November 2015

⁵ Available online at:

<http://www.tinderfoundation.org/our-thinking/research-publications/social-return-investment-analysis-tinder-foundation>

As Government services continue to move to 'digital by default' it is essential that staff are supported to understand, embrace and promote digital technology. The remit of the Digital Ambassador programme is to equip HMRC staff with these skills and behaviours by training them to level 7 on the GDS digital inclusion scale.⁶

Through the HMRC Digital Ambassador Pilot, Tinder Foundation has worked with HMRC to:

- Design an agile 'test and learn' Digital Ambassador pilot in collaboration with HMRC staff. To date, the programme has **trained and developed 99** HMRC Digital Ambassadors and **recruited a further 80** to take the programme forward. The Digital Ambassadors are HMRC employees who advocate for digital, training and inspire the wider workforce of HMRC employees to improve their digital skills.
- Train 30 Digital Ambassadors through two face-to-face training workshops in November 2015.
- Train a further 149 Digital Ambassadors by March 2016 using the HMRC [Digital Ambassador e-learning course](#) which was launched on 1 February 2016. The e-learning course was developed in collaboration with HMRC Digital Ambassadors using an agile user-centred design and co-creation approach. It is being used in conjunction with a mentoring scheme within the HMRC Digital Ambassador programme.

The number of Digital Ambassadors recruited to date is **179**. This falls below the target of **330**. This is due to slow early recruitment internally within HMRC, and a staged approach which recruits and trains small cohorts to add to the main group of Digital Ambassadors. This process slows the progress of recruitment, but it ensures that Digital Ambassadors are trained to a high level, mentored by current Digital Ambassadors, and ready to take up their role as soon as training is complete. This staged process also gives time for awareness and buy-in to build among HMRC staff. This is crucial to the success of the programme as an **effective grassroots workforce development programme for cultural change** within HMRC. In the most successful centres of activity, such as Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Bradford, this cultural shift is already taking place.

- The success of the HMRC Digital Ambassador pilot was evaluated through a comprehensive framework comprising engagement and impact surveys, phone and face-to-face interviews and qualitative Digital Ambassador case studies. This framework enabled us to measure:
 - the number of Digital Ambassadors trained;
 - the satisfaction levels of Digital Ambassadors with the training provided;
 - the increase in Digital Ambassadors' confidence and ability to teach digital skills to colleagues;
 - the sustainability of the Digital Ambassador network.

As a result, between September 2015 and March 2016, 89% of Digital Ambassadors rated their overall experience of the training as good or excellent. After completing the training, **96% of Digital Ambassadors said they felt confident or very confident in teaching digital skills**. 92% of Digital Ambassadors believe that the role has contributed to their efficiency or ability in the workplace.

The first cohort of 30 Digital Ambassadors have **each gone on to train and support an average of 20 colleagues** through face-to-face support. **This means that the first cohort of 30 has directly trained 600 colleagues. The total Digital Ambassador cohort of 99 have trained 1,980 people**. This number is expected to grow significantly as new cohorts of Digital Ambassadors settle into their role. Digital Ambassadors have also designed and disseminated toolkits, run online training sessions, and given telephone support to HMRC colleagues. If wider reach is taken into account, the figure is much greater.

⁶ Government Digital Service, 'Government Digital Inclusion Strategy', 2014.

Based on Digital Ambassadors' own reports of their activity, the total reach of all Ambassadors is estimated at around 4,000 colleagues.

Digital inclusion findings: channel shift and HMRC productivity

HMRC invested in the FDI programme to encourage users of government services to switch to online service channel, and to increase the productivity of HMRC staff. The key findings from the programme relating to these two measures of success are set out below.

1. Cost savings from transactional channel shift for HMRC customers

- **41%** of people trained through the pilot report making fewer calls and visits to government services (including HMRC) as a result of learning how to access these services online.⁷
- **18,531** people have become confident in using digital channels.
- Of the people who shifted transactions, the average number of transactions shifted per month from face-to-face or telephone to digital was **3.8**.
- **70,418** transactions shifted from face-to-face and telephone to digital channels.
- Cost savings per transaction are **£2.68** for telephone transactions shifted to online, and **£8.47** for face-to-face transactions shifted to online (SOCITM, 2012).⁸ Calculations assume a 50:50 split between the two kinds of transaction.
- For the period September 2015 - March 2016, this equates to a **£94,360 channel shift saving on telephone transactions and a £298,220 channel shift saving on face-to-face transactions**.
- Assuming that project beneficiaries continue to use online channels for a period of five years, the **overall channel shift saving** as a result of HMRC investment in the Pilot between September 2015 - March 2016 is **£3,925,800**.

2. Productivity benefits of Digital Ambassadors

Raising the level of digital skills amongst HMRC staff has huge potential to increase HMRC productivity and drive efficiency. Although the HMRC Digital Ambassador agile pilot is still a work-in-progress, there are positive indications that the programme is creating significant value and has the potential to deliver substantial productivity gains.

Applying evidence from studies by American Express and McKinsey & Company, we have modelled the potential gains in productivity attributable to the Digital Ambassadors pilot in HMRC, firstly based on the scale of the pilot, and secondly assuming a subsequent rollout.

A 2013 study of over 2,000 personnel by American Express, focusing on a company-wide leadership development programme, found that interventions delivered using a 'blended' approach (of online, tutor-led, and self-led learning), which mirrors the approach used in the pilot, **increased staff productivity by 12%**; this was 2% more than purely tutor-led learning and 7% more than purely online learning.

- Assuming a typical Administrative Officer (AO) role at the lowest end of the salary band (£19,510), a 12% increase in productivity would equate to **£2,341 per person**.
- Through the Pilot, we have trained 99 Digital Ambassadors in total, at an estimated cost of £40,000.

⁷ UK online centres learner progression survey data, Q2-3 2015-16. Data tables available on request.

⁸ Cited in Government Digital Service, 'Digital Efficiency Report' 2012:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-efficiency-report/digital-efficiency-report>.

- On average, each Digital Ambassador will train and support 20 other HMRC colleagues using a blended learning approach.
- This means that we can expect 1,980 colleagues to be trained in total through the pilot. This would deliver a productivity benefit of **£4,635,180, with an ROI of £115 for every £1 invested.**
- The current outputs of Digital Ambassador programme have seeded a training model which we expect to develop over time to develop and train **330 Digital Ambassadors.**
- A total number of 330 Digital Ambassadors would result in the project reaching 6,600 HMRC staff. This total would deliver a productivity benefit of £15.44m, with a ROI of £386 for every £1 invested.
- Scaling this up across the whole of HMRC (64,000 staff), assuming that 3,000 Digital Ambassadors were trained at a cost of £219,000, reaching 60,000 other colleagues, the **total productivity benefit would be around £140m, with a ROI of £641 for every £1 invested.**

A 2012 report by McKinsey & Company found that using social technologies in the workplace (email, social media) could increase productivity by 20%-25%. This implies that the productivity gains could be even greater than calculated above.

3. Qualitative findings from Digital Ambassadors pilot

Telephone and face-to-face interviews with Digital Ambassadors have produced a range of qualitative findings, which are outlined below. Further details can be found in Annex 3.

- **Broadening the scope:** As HMRC moves towards using more digital processes in the workplace, training becomes vital. Digital Ambassadors have highlighted the need for the definition of level 7 digital skills to be broadened to include everyday workplace applications of technology.
- **Efficiency and workforce development:** The use of collaborative digital tools, such as cloud computing and Voice over IP, drives efficiency. This is especially important in an organisation like HMRC that has a large and distributed workforce. Digital Ambassadors have been quick to recognise the value of collaborative technologies, and are using, providing training in, and advocating for these applications.
- **Digital skills in the workplace:** Digital Ambassadors almost exclusively see their role as providers and advocates of work-specific digital skills. This is largely driven by their colleagues, who recognise their own need for embedded digital skills support. One Digital Ambassador reported that “everyone is pleased that there is a Digital Ambassador in this office”.
- **Blend of informal and formal learning:** 42% of Digital Ambassadors have delivered informal support, and 52% of Digital Ambassadors have mixed informal support with more formal learning sessions.
- **Growth and communications:** Formal sessions are growing and becoming more frequent as Digital Ambassadors become embedded in the HMRC workplace training model. One Digital Ambassador has been approached by a number of other teams to offer group training sessions. These have taken place both in person and through internet conferencing.
- **Location matters:** Because of the mix of locations, some Digital Ambassadors work in offices with large numbers of colleagues, while others are in small teams. This has a huge impact on the way in which Digital Ambassadors see their roles. It is often those ambassadors in larger offices who have been more proactive in reaching out to colleagues, either through training sessions, team-wide communications, posters, and presentations.
- **Digital Ambassador role and personal development:** For some Digital Ambassadors, the role itself is providing a key personal development experience. Ambassadors reported that they have gained experience in teaching and public speaking. As a result, they feel more confident, and more prepared for workplace progression and leadership.

4. Greater than expected UK online centre interest in, and demand for, support to use of HMRC services

- Whilst the pilot programme originally sought to fund 40 local centres to deliver digital skills training for existing or potential HMRC customers, demand for this support from centres far outstripped this original cohort size. In response, Tinder Foundation has now funded **70 centres, dramatically increasing the pilot's reach and impact.**
- As a result, between September 2015 and January 2016, **HMRC supported 45,401 people to learn basic digital skills**, exceeding the delivery target for the project of 45,333.

Digital skills support case study: The Benn Partnership

The Benn Partnership is an HMRC FDI-funded digital inclusion centre in Rugby, West Midlands. At this centre, employment support, basic digital skills, and benefits and advice services are all very closely linked. The centre is located in the top 30% of deprived wards in the country, and responds to a wide range of community needs.

The Benn Partnership developed a job club in response to high levels of unemployment in the area. When members of the public first come into contact with the job club, they are assessed through a one-to-one interview with a member of staff. This interview is an opportunity to discuss and assess the needs of the learner. In these discussions, the member of staff also discusses tax and benefits, training, and other support that may be relevant to the learner. This interview acts as a referral point for further support, and often leads to more detailed benefits support, job-coaching, and learning. This might be delivered by staff of the Benn Partnership, as is the case with basic digital skills training, or it may be provided by an Adult and Community Learning provider, who rent space in the centre.

This provides the first point of contact with an individual and allows the centres to deal with benefit enquiries from the wider public. HMRC funding has maintained this resource, and enabled drop-in supported digital sessions to be offered all week.

Unemployment fluctuates in the area, as local warehouses and distribution centres offer a high number of seasonal and temporary contracts. This work is often low-paid, and employees need to transition between jobseeking benefits and in-work benefits. The centre uses volunteers to closely support learners, both in jobsearch and wider computer use. The volunteers don't see these things as separate, but as part of the same project:

“I get them talking, build their confidence up. I've had one lady who came in who had lost her job, had zero confidence, and hardly spoke to anybody. As I got her involved with other people, helping them, her confidence has built up so much that she is now a volunteer herself. Confidence is an

important part of learning. It gets learners moving, and gives them the encouragement to go for it.”

Karen, IT support volunteer

Referral from the initial interview into digital learning is very common. The Benn Partnership run drop-in IT sessions every day, with staff or volunteers on hand to support learners. The level of support varies, with some learners being supported through basic digital skills, and others with functional skills like accessing government information and services, including those provided by HMRC. This has recently taken on additional urgency as Universal Credit is rolled out across the borough. The Benn Partnership expect to support more working people as tax credits are brought into the Universal Credit system.

Digital Ambassador case study: Mary Roberts

Mary Roberts, an Administrative Officer in Central Workflow within Business Tax at HMRC, took on the role of Digital Ambassador late in 2015. The initiative complements her designated role in HMRC, as a ‘Digital Mail System (DMS) super-user’. Mary is responsible for helping the staff in her office to transition to DMS, a system which electronically stores companies’ correspondence and tax returns when scanned. The items of mail are dropped into queues and then allocated to the right teams.

Until DMS, the mailing system was manual and every office received their own post direct. Now, anything between 500 and 1000 items arrive daily with the central workflow team, which are then sorted into batches of 100 and sent for scanning. As Mary explained, “not long ago every HMRC office had sorting trays for white mail, but now only Central workflow have these, and eventually they should become obsolete.”

Because a lot of the work in Mary’s team was manual, many of her colleagues didn’t use computers at work. Numerous pieces of research have found a strong correlation between confident use of technology at home and in the workplace: if HMRC are more confident using computers at home, then they will also become more confident using workplace systems.

Mary thinks that this skills issue needs to be approached from every direction. Any small step in technology use can develop an individual’s confidence. Learning these skills isn’t constrained by whether it is workplace or personal use of technology. Mary believes that any new skill with technology will help develop that person’s general digital skills and confidence, and that this can’t fail to have a positive impact on their use of technology. She explained: “Colleagues know that they need to get up to speed with digital at work, but some of my colleagues just aren’t switched on to digital - they don’t use a smartphone and don’t yet recognise the difference being online could make to them personally.”

Mary is approaching her role in two ways. Firstly, she is making herself known as a Digital Ambassador in the office, offering informal support when problems arise. So far, this has involved helping people to attach files on an email, working on two screens, and downloading apps. Engaging

people is also about catching them at the right time, and with the right thing. Mary noted that she and other Ambassadors are taking “a really informal approach to the training to get people interested. For example, I’ve introduced some colleagues to dieting and fitness apps to help keep them motivated with their new year resolutions.”

In addition, Mary is planning a series of organised sessions, which will take place during lunch breaks. Sessions will include how to use Google Drive and Google Docs, online training, internet security and social networking - including understanding the workplace policy on social media. For those becoming Digital Ambassadors, HMRC are providing a number of tablet devices, to support the digital skills drive across the organisation and make training using Tinder Foundation resources such as Learn My Way much easier.

Mary is trying to engage people by offering support on all kinds of digital use. She’s connecting personal and work-related digital support, because she sees this as the best way of developing fluent, confident users of technology. She explained: “People who use the internet at home tend to be more confident using technology at work, but this project is really important because it helps those who are at a risk of getting left behind stay productive at work, as well as enjoy all the personal benefits of having basic digital skills, such as keeping in touch with friends and family and shopping online.”

Annex 1

Figure 1: Rates of digital exclusion across English regions funded through HMRC Digital Inclusion Pilot

Region	% Population digitally excluded
West Midlands	15.2%
North East	14.3%
East Midlands	14.2%
Yorkshire and Humber	14.2%
North West	13.5%

Annex 2

The HMRC Digital Inclusion Pilot Theory of Change

The following Theory of Change models causation between the delivery of UK online centre support to develop the skills required to interact with HMRC digital services, and the generation of benefits to the Government:

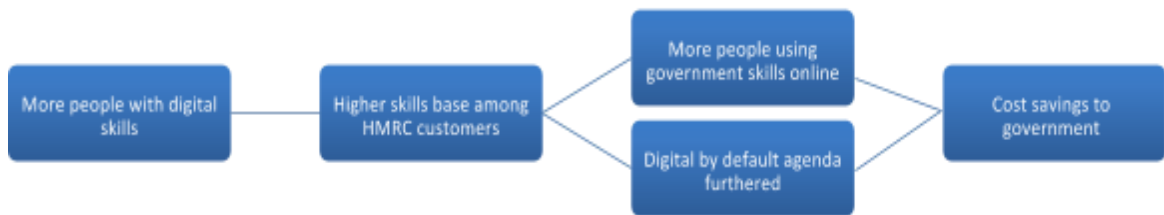


Figure 2: SROI Theory of Change for financial benefit to Government of digital skills training through UK online centres

Annex 3

HMRC Digital Ambassadors - further qualitative findings

As Government services continue to move to 'digital by default' it is essential that staff are supported to understand, embrace and promote digital technology. This is the case, both for customer-facing digital processes and internal use of digital.

HMRC's Digital Ambassador programme has trained 179 HMRC employees to advocate for digital skills, train, and inspire the wider workforce of 64,000 employees to improve their digital skills. Initial Digital Ambassador training was provided by Tinder Foundation through face-to-face workshops. Subsequent Digital Ambassador training was delivered through bespoke e-learning, and supported by the strong network of current Digital Ambassadors. A buddying programme pairs new and established Digital Ambassadors. This is supported by online groups resources, which Digital Ambassadors contribute to, and share regularly.

The remit of the Digital Ambassador programme is to train HMRC staff to level 7 on the GDS digital inclusion scale.⁹ Level 7 covers a range of skills, activities, and attitudes towards digital technologies. These include:

- Sending and receiving emails.
- Keeping safe online.
- Using a search engine.
- Identifying and deleting spam.
- Making a booking or purchase online.
- Accessing government services online.
- Filling out an online application form.

As HMRC moves towards increased use of digital in the workplace, the expectation is that the definition of level 7 will be broadened to include everyday workplace applications of technology. This should include use of cloud storage (such as Google Docs), Onenote, or the digitisation of core services, such as the Digital Mail System. Embedding these new processes has the potential to significantly increase productivity and efficiency within HMRC. Digital Ambassadors have a key role to play in developing these skills across the workforce through grassroots training and support.

Types of support: workplace and personal

Our evaluation of the Digital Ambassador programme found that the distinction between workplace and personal digital use was potentially problematic for Digital Ambassadors. There seems to be a strong distinction between those Digital Ambassadors who view their role as general digital skills support, and those who expect only to support colleagues with work-specific skills.

This distinction is complicated by the transition that HMRC are making to increased use of digital in the workplace. The implementation of new technologies at HMRC means that:

⁹ Government Digital Service, 'Government Digital Inclusion Strategy', 2014. Available online at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-inclusion-strategy/government-digital-inclusion-strategy#annex-2-digital-inclusion-scale-for-individuals>

- Employees with high digital skills are requesting training on specific workplace applications of technology. This has broadened the scope of the project slightly, and extended the support provided beyond those employees who are strictly below level 7 on the digital inclusion scale. For those receiving this training, expert peer-to-peer support is often more productive than exploratory self-learning.
- For many employees, even those with low digital skills, learning about workplace technology is more urgent than learning about general digital skills.

The dominance of work-specific skills is clear in the survey data, which suggests that:

- 91.6% of support was with use of workplace software and programmes.
- 50% of support was with access to HMRC e-learning.

Despite these findings, staff attitudes towards Digital Ambassadors focus on the informal aspect of the training. 67% of Digital Ambassadors believe that they are seen as offering informal support, rather than workplace CPD.

The distinction between workplace and personal digital skills training also appears to be very dependent on the kind of office that the Ambassador is working in. Some interviews were conducted with Ambassadors who are working in small offices, with colleagues who are very computer literate. The likelihood in these cases is that the Ambassador's colleagues are already above level 7 on the digital inclusion scale. In these cases, the Digital Ambassador role becomes less about developing the general digital confidence and fluency of others. Instead, Ambassadors tend to focus on workplace-specific skills and applications. The use of Google Drive and cloud-based working was frequently mentioned by participants. Locations where digital confidence was highest saw the implementation and testing of cloud technologies, advocated for by the Ambassador. This interacts with other technological progress within HMRC, such as the roll-out of tablet use among some staff. In these cases, the Ambassadors are developing themselves as a source of expert information and guidance on specific workplace technologies, and thereby driving greater organisational efficiency.

Other Digital Ambassadors are working in offices with a higher proportion of staff of lower grades, and a greater range of digital capability. In these cases, the Ambassador's role is more mixed, as they are often called upon to provide both workplace-specific training and wider digital advocacy. This is particularly the case in offices with new digital systems which have replaced manual or limited digital work. In these locations, there is a much higher likelihood that staff are less confident computer users, who do not use digital for a wide variety of tasks. Because of their lack of fluency, these employees are less well equipped to troubleshoot or explore when using digital technologies. In these locations, Digital Ambassadors have a much more direct role as advocates for digital. One Ambassador saw her role as providing predominantly informal support, and saw herself as a strong advocate for personal, as well as workplace, digital use. Confidence with technologies can become fluency, and when users become fluent, they easily and naturally transfer those skills between personal and workplace use of digital.

Training offered by Digital Ambassadors

All Digital Ambassadors appear to have embraced the idea that their role includes informal, peer-to-peer support:

- 42% of Digital Ambassadors have delivered only informal support.

- 52% of Digital Ambassadors have mixed informal support with more formal sessions.

Because of the mix of informal and formal support, there was a large disparity in the length of time that Ambassadors spent with their trainees. Formal sessions extended up to 2 hours, while informal support often lasted for only 5 minutes.

Clear patterns have not emerged about the most successful type of interaction, but Ambassadors suggest that the combination is a useful way to embed the provision within the culture of HMRC. Formal sessions appear to be effective, both as a way engaging a large numbers of colleagues, and as a way of making the Digital Ambassador known to their colleagues as a source of advice and support. Several Digital Ambassadors reported that they were delivering formal support beyond their own team, either through planned sessions in other offices, or through internet conferencing. In turn, this formal role feeds into wider awareness that Digital Ambassadors can also be approached for informal training. HMRC employees with low digital skills seemed to particularly appreciate the offer of informal one-to-one support with specific digital tasks and applications.

Awareness raising is vital to the role, both as a way of engaging colleagues in learning, and as a way of advocating for digital more generally. The success of the project hinges on support from managers and senior figures within the organisation. The most successful locations in the pilot are those in which managers have recognised and promoted the key work of Digital Ambassadors. Organisationally, HMRC could do more to promote the work of Digital Ambassadors through an internal marketing campaign.

Because of the mix of locations, some Digital Ambassadors work in offices with large numbers of colleagues, while others are in small teams. This has a big impact on the way in which Digital Ambassadors see their roles. It is often those Ambassadors in larger offices who have been more proactive in reaching out to colleagues, either through training sessions, team-wide communications, posters, and presentations.

Training and support for Digital Ambassadors

Digital Ambassadors have overwhelmingly reported on requests for support with new HMRC digital initiatives. These have included the use of Google Drive, Yammer, Google Hangouts, and use of tablets in the workplace. Only 60% of Digital Ambassadors currently feel confident teaching these skills. However, the current staged model of Digital Ambassador recruitment builds in time for new Digital Ambassadors to build these skills by partnering with more experienced Digital Ambassadors. Future recruitment and training of Digital Ambassadors should take the success of this model into account.

Digital Ambassadors believe that the delay in them receiving tablets has hindered their ability to deliver training on specific applications. Tablets make demonstration much easier to a group, and the use of these devices in training has the potential to dramatically increase the quality and ease of training and engagement.