

# A Microsoft Digital Skills Programme in Staffordshire

A smart solution for a smart county and city



## Microsoft's skills ambitions – 2020 goals and programmes

We live in an age of technological progress with every aspect of our lives shaped by digital transformation. This has been called by some the fourth industrial revolution, a period of time recognised by the blurring of lines between physical, digital and biological worlds, underpinned by a range of technological innovations.

However, with transformation comes disruption and there is a growing concern over job growth, economic opportunity, and the world we are building for the next generation. But with disruption comes opportunity, and so the real question is how can technology create more opportunity not for a few but for all.

In the UK, the Digital Economy has had a very significant impact on jobs and growth. According to TechCity UK & Nesta's Tech Nation 2016 – an ambitious data-driven mapping of the UK's digital tech ecosystem – digital economy businesses have grown by 30% in the last five years. And as one of the fastest growing sector in the UK economy, the sector turns over £161bn annually, contributing 7% of the national output and providing 1.56 million jobs.

As a result, technology skills requirements are rapidly changing in the workforce. Technical skills that used to be important for a narrow band of students pursuing computer science or technology curriculum are now priorities across the education spectrum. Jobs require the skills across all sectors making it increasingly difficult to think of a position or career that is not touched in some way by technology. With help from Karen Harris, here we've pulled together five key pieces of advice to capitalise on the sales potential of the shopping phenomenon that is Black Friday.

### Microsoft's 2020 goal

In order to address an increasing skills gap, Microsoft has outlined its commitment to help to equip the UK with vital digital skills not only for the technology industry but also for business, public sector, communities and individuals.

Working with government, educators, charities and industry to help the UK increase its digital capability, Microsoft aims to help people gain higher skilled, higher paid work and address immediate and near-term skills needs through apprenticeships and skills development programmes, as well as building a stronger future talent pipeline by supporting efforts within the education system.

This multi-year strategy will provide training in both everyday digital literacy as well as targeted efforts to equip the UK's public and private sectors with vital cloud technology skills.

This programme has three core objectives:

1. Move computer science forwards to support the UK's future talent pipeline
2. Improve the flow of people pursuing digital careers and increase the number of ways into roles
3. Equip businesses, public sector organisations and charities with vital Cloud skills

### Digital schools – moving the schools computing and coding agenda forward

Recent research conducted by Microsoft and FutureLab found that almost 65% of today's students will be doing jobs that don't exist yet as a result of technological change.

For students to build up the necessary skills to ensure they future proof their careers, therefore, they must develop key digital skills.

Microsoft aims to engage 3 million UK students to coding and computing by 2020 through interactive and inspiring coding projects and activities. This will include:

- Specially designed projects and activities on Microsoft Coding Platforms
- Engaging resources and training for schools, teachers, pupils and parents
- Support for the growth of #STEMClubs
- National Coding Competition

## Digital people – creating more routes into tech

The biggest issue facing any successful IT business in the UK is recruiting the qualified people they need to grow their company. Hiring people with the right skills, particularly when you are a small business, can be a huge and extremely costly challenge. Equally, how does the IT industry continue to grow the breadth of opportunities available in the UK to help us to combat the skills shortage we face?

Microsoft launched its Partner Apprenticeship programme in 2010 to both widen out the available talent pool for employers and offer new routes into a tech career as an alternative to (but not instead of) university.

To ensure the UK continues to provide varied routes into digital careers, Microsoft aims to create 30,000 new Digital Apprentices by 2020. To support this ambition, activities will include:

- Microsoft Apprenticeship Programme
- Support for individuals and businesses to identify Microsoft strategic skills priorities, align with priority job roles
- Engagement with nationally approved Microsoft Learning Partners and local university partnerships to offer advanced, higher and degree apprenticeships
- Materials to support schools in promoting apprenticeships as part of career guidance

## Digital business, public sector and charities – acquiring vital cloud skills

People must have the skills to contribute to and benefit from technology if the Fourth Industrial Revolution is to benefit all. Within the next two decades, 90 percent of jobs will require some level of digital proficiency, while the shortage of technical skills continues to grow. However, while there is a growing need for digital skills, our own research and experience has highlighted an increasing Cloud Skills gap.

To ensure everyone in the UK has the opportunity to upskill and reskill, Microsoft is committed to offering digital skills courses from digital literacy through to advanced Cloud technology skills. Through this programme, Microsoft aims to provide free training to entire UK population, provide training for 30,000 public sector officials and train 500,000 Cloud experts. The programme will include:

- Free online digital literacy courses
- Free online courses for business, tech, developer and public sector roles needing cloud skills group
- Access to Microsoft's Professional Programme for Data Science
- Cloud Skill regional boot camps

## The digital skills partnership between the Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire enterprise partnership and Microsoft

Microsoft welcomes the opportunity to support the development of smart cities and counties and are delighted to partner with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and many local partners to support the transformation of the region's economy, education, skills and public services.

Microsoft and the local digital industry cluster group will work with the LEP to align activities and agreed outcomes with broader Economic Growth objectives.

Microsoft working through the LEP can offer very practical support to grow digital skills capabilities and capacity.

### What does that mean for Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire?

Microsoft has long recognised its responsibility to work with national governments to contribute towards shared goals of growth, opportunity and empowerment. However the Digital Skills agenda needs to deliver real impact at a local level to be truly effective. This requires local leadership in Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire to take up the challenge and Microsoft can partner with those who want to own the agenda locally, providing access to programmes, professional expertise and support as required.

### Digital schools – moving the schools computing and coding agenda forward

- Aim: engage 3 million UK students with coding courses
- **Possible regional ambitions: engage 50,000 Staffordshire students with coding courses**

### Digital people – creating more routes into tech

- Aim: create 30,000 digital apprentices
- **Possible regional ambitions: create 1000 Staffordshire digital apprentices**

### Digital business, public sector and charities – acquiring vital cloud skills

- **Aim:** train 30,000 UK public servants
- **Possible regional ambitions: train 1200 Staffordshire public servants**
- **Aim:** 500,000 UK cloud experts
- **Possible regional ambitions: train 20,000 Staffordshire cloud experts**
- **Free Digital Literacy programmes for all Staffordshire citizens**

### Expanding our regional offer increasing computing and coding

Microsoft can work also with local partners to further turbo charge interest in the Digital Skills agenda, building on the local STEM ambassador and Microsoft's own digital ambassador programmes. Additional support could include:

- Running a training day for 100 teachers
- Running a training day for local STEM ambassadors
- Running a training day for computer science students at local universities to support their school outreach programmes
- Practical support in preparing for national competitions

### More routes into tech

Microsoft can work with local partners, colleges, universities and schools to land the Microsoft Apprenticeship Programme in Staffordshire.

### Supporting business, public sector organisations and charities

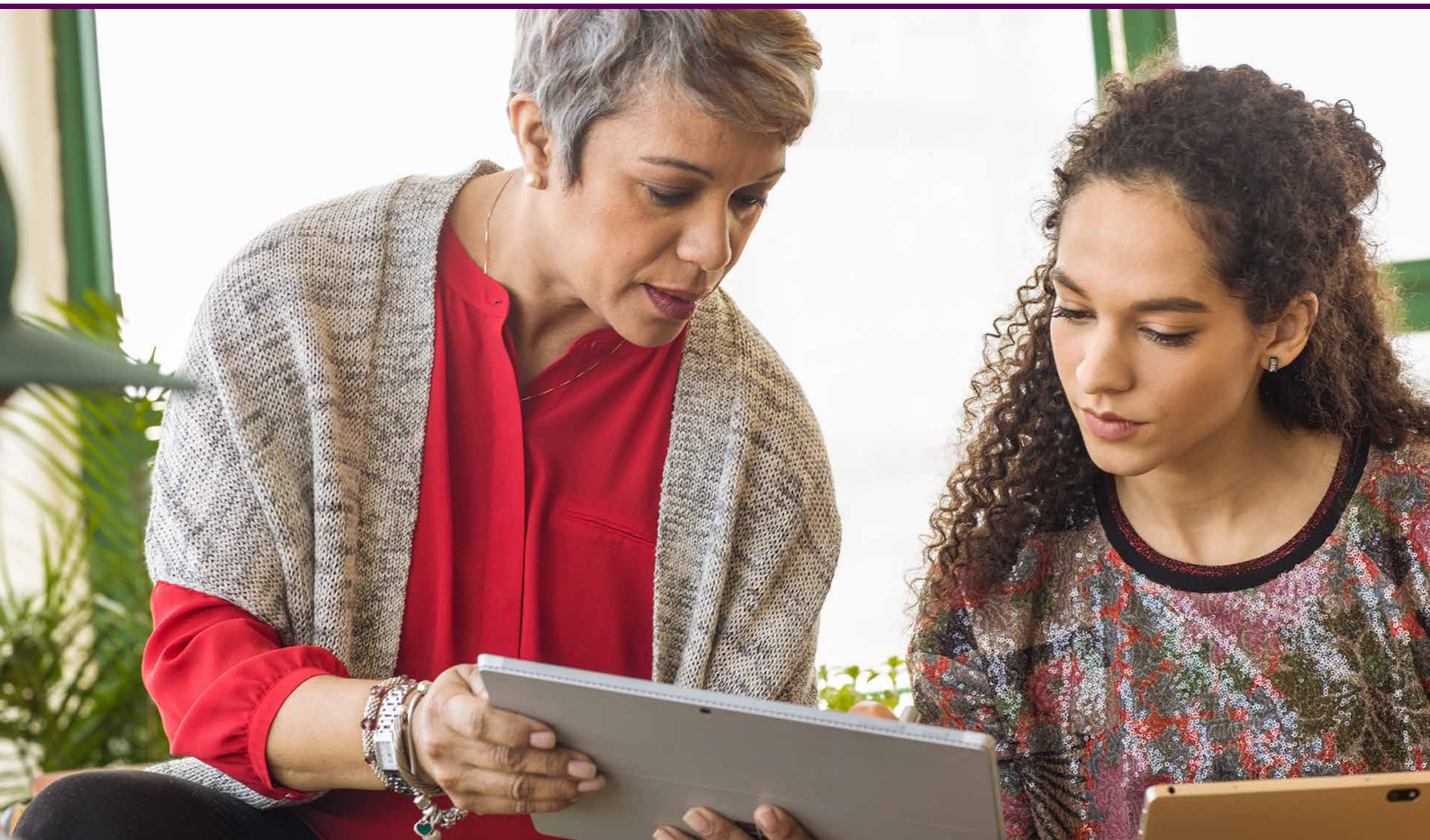
Microsoft and the digital industry cluster will work also with business networks, local business mentor groups and others to develop larger scale interventions and support. This could include:

- Providing content and expert presenters for a “Build a company in a day on the cloud” regional workshop
- Providing regional cloud skills bootcamps

### Our asks

The LEP and Microsoft, working with an expanding digital industry cluster, want the digital skills activities to be a genuine local partnership, owned and led locally. We will look to the many local stakeholders to:

- Provide access to the business community
- To facilitate effective collaboration across the public and charities sectors to maximise the impact of upskilling employees to support Digital Transformation of public services
- To identify and agree a long-term programme of activities and events that will contribute to the digital skills goals outlined
- To support expansion of STEM ambassador and business mentor programmes to embed digital literacy and skills across all ages and sectors
- To provide suitable local venues for meetings and online engagement



## Taking the next step

Microsoft and the enterprise partnership want to make it as easy as possible for your organisation to participate in the digital agenda.

### Developing the digital economy

The LEP has sponsored the creation of a digital industry cluster, chaired by Alun Rogers, a founding director of Stafford based Risual. The aims of the cluster group will be:

- To provide guidance on the evolving digital skills agenda
- Support local businesses to define their digital skills needs
- Develop awareness of a Tech Talent pool to support local growth
- Support all sectors in understanding the benefits of “moving to the cloud”
- Support the LEP board in developing a Smart Staffordshire agenda

Please email [Alun@risual.com](mailto:Alun@risual.com) if you want to be part of that group

### Developing digital skills

The LEP, supported by Microsoft, has developed four cluster groups who have a particular interest in driving the digital skills agenda in four key activities.

- Computer science and coding in schools
- Digital apprenticeships
- Cloud technology training for businesses
- Cloud technology training for public sector organisations

A programme of interviews across Staffordshire has identified a few likely members of each cluster who will work with Microsoft and the digital industry group to share best practice, update members on new developments, distribute new material etc. Each group will appoint a chair in due course.

Please email [melvyn@mjibusinesssolutions.com](mailto:melvyn@mjibusinesssolutions.com) if you want to get involved in one or more groups and have not yet engaged.

### Thank you

*The aim is to create a genuine local partnership to deliver a fast-evolving digital skills agenda, supported by Microsoft resources and assets. We would not have made even the progress we have without the strong sponsorship of key leaders in Staffordshire.*

*Microsoft and the LEP wish to thank in particular the leadership of Staffordshire County Council, the University of Staffordshire and the directors of Risual for supporting the early work.*

*We would like to thank too the fifty or so individuals representing a wide cross section of organisations in Stoke-on-Trent & Staffordshire who so willingly gave their time and shared their thoughts and experiences. All are welcome to move the agenda forward.*

