



Digital Divide Specialist Group Presentation to CPHC

16 April 2026



What can universities do

- Ensure that students are aware of “digital divide” challenges: devices, connectivity and skills. This could be part of the Legal, Social, Ethical and Professional Issues curriculum, but needn’t be
- Build these into assessments: “how would this work for someone who ...” (as appropriate: see tool)
 - Is accessing via a not-very-smart phone
 - Is using weak 3G to access the application
 - Can’t memorise difficult passwords
 - Finds “cut and paste” difficult
- Make sure (possibly via BCS student chapter or other student society) of the ways in which they can personally help via community volunteering
- You or a colleague may wish to join the BCS Digital Divide Specialist Group
- Join the BCS Digital Divide Specialist Group – to help socialise this issue so that we can mobilise all
- Come and help us build and test the Digital Inclusive Design Education Tool to educate next generation of digital designers and implementors
- Ask how your university’s Access and Participation Plan (APP) address this?
- Ask is your university’s Digital Strategy includes Digital Inclusion or is Digital Inclusion Strategy separate?

Digital Inclusive Design Educational Tool

Initiative

BCS members David Smith CIP MBBS and Freddie Quek FBCS, along with Kate Harrison, Rich Thurston, Elena Dumitrana, Nicola Duckett embarked on a groundbreaking initiative to create a ***National Catalogue of Digital Personas*** that everyone could contribute to and utilise.

Problem

Today's use of digital personas assume if it is good enough for 80%, it is representative of the entire population. They also assume that users are able bodied and have digital skills. The team's initial research, which included insights from LOTI, Lloyds Bank and Cambridge University, led them to identify 13 additional dimensions to be considered for digital personas. This complexity proved to be a challenge. By consulting with experts, including older adults, disabled individuals, and neurodiverse individuals, they realised that these digital personas needed to be dynamic, evolving with users' changing needs—whether temporary, permanent, or situational. This revelation inspired the creation of a comprehensive matrix and a decision tree to refine their approach.

Solution

The result is an innovative **Digital Inclusive Design Educational Tool** aimed at designers and developers, guiding them in creating digital solutions that consider both the physical and cognitive constraints of all users. At the core of this tool is a two-part approach; the first part focuses on universal design principles that apply to 80% of users, while the second part addresses adaptive design, specifically catering to the remaining 20% who might be digitally excluded due to various constraints.

Goal

The initiative's goal is to become the go-to educational tool for digital solution designers and developers worldwide so that it has the greatest impact for all users of digital products and solutions.

Undo Save Redo



Name

Jane Doe

Demographics

Add, edit or randomise your persona's demographics via the information tab on the right.

Age	34
Location	Rural Norfolk
Occupation	Stay at home parent
Income	<£10k
Education	Bachelor's degree

Constraints

Add up to 3 constraints to your persona via the tabs on the right. Choose from motor, vision, auditory, speech, and cognition.







Information

Motor

Vision

Auditory

Speech

Cognition

Does Jane have a motor constraint? ?

☒ Yes ☐ No

What is the state of Jane's motor constraint? ?



Situational
e.g. Carrying a baby



Temporary
e.g. Broken arm



Permanent
e.g. Missing limbs

What is the frequency of Jane's motor constraint? ?

☐ Rarely

☒ Often

☐ Always

How much support does Jane require? ?

☐ A little

☒ Some

☐ A lot

Designing for users with motor constraints

Users with motor constraints may face significant challenges when using digital products and devices.

These difficulties may arise from temporary or permanent limitations in fine motor control, strength, or coordination. Or they may stem from situational limitations such as carrying a baby. Many interfaces are often not designed with accessibility in mind, leading to issues

Resources

- DPA (2022), Digital Policy Evidence Review (2022, but still very relevant): <https://digitalpovertyalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/UK-Digital-Poverty-Evidence-Review-2022-v1.0-compressed.pdf>
- DPA (2023), Digital Poverty in the UK: A socio-economic assessment of the implications of digital poverty in the UK. https://digitalpovertyalliance.org/research_directory/digital-poverty-in-the-uk-a-socio-economic-assessment-of-the-implications-of-digital-poverty-in-the-uk/
- Royal Society (2025), Disability technology How data and digital assistive technologies can support independent, fulfilled lives: <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/projects/disability-technology/disability-technology-report.pdf>
- DSIT (2025), Digital Inclusion Action Plan: First Steps: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/digital-inclusion-action-plan-first-steps>
- Connection Project (2026), Misconnected: How the UK can choose a better digital future: <https://www.connectionproject.co.uk/insights/misconnected-march-2026>

Agenda (BCS and Digital Divide Specialist Group)

Our World: Physical and Digital

Our Interest: Digital Inclusion

Our Responsibility: "Make IT good for society"

Make technology accessible, usable and beneficial to all

Regardless of background and identity

To create a more just and equitable digital society

What is the Problem?



Complex Social Context

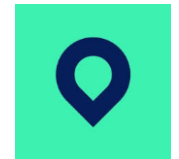
HAVE
CAN
WILL

V.S

HAVE NOT
CAN NOT
WILL NOT

Everything is digital.
Digital is not a luxury.

Digital Poverty - The inability to interact with the online world fully - when, where and how an individual needs to”



Digital
Poverty
Alliance



Whose responsibility
to solve this?

Why does it matter?



1/5

people and 1 in 3 children in UK live in poverty

10m

need essential digital skills for everyday life

30%

of adults over 65 years old do not use Internet

digital
poverty
alliance

Snapshot: Key statistics



Approx **3.8 million** adults do not have access to a laptop, smartphone or computer.

– *Digital Exclusion: A review of Ofcom's research on digital exclusion among adults in the UK 2022*



Approx **1.7 million** households do not have internet access.

– *Digital Exclusion: A review of Ofcom's research on digital exclusion among adults in the UK 2022*



Approx **10 million** adults do not have foundation level essential digital skills.

– *Lloyds Consumer Digital Index 2022*



Approx **1.4 million** households only rely on mobile data to get online.

– *Digital Exclusion: A review of Ofcom's research on digital exclusion among adults in the UK 2022*

digitalpovertyalliance.org

[@digipovalliance](https://twitter.com/digipovalliance)

The Young, Old and everyone in between are being left behind!

How we can help

Socialising Initiatives



#joiningthedots Dashboard

#joiningthedots #uktechleaders communities and partners involved in digital inclusion initiatives

2024

DIGITAL INCLUSION



Device



Data Connectivity



Tech Support



Motivation & Confidence



Digital Skills



Tech Career Opportunities



Safety and Security



Inclusive Design



Connect & Communicate



Research and Data

DESIRED OUTCOME

Action Area 1a

Appropriate device per person

Action Area 1b

Sufficient and affordable data plans

Action Area 2a

Technical support for supporters of beneficiaries & beneficiaries

Action Area 2b

Support to address fear, confidence, motivation, capability

Action Area 3

Essential digital skills

Action Area 4

Career talks, apprenticeship, work placement, mentoring

Action Area 6

CyberSafe practices

Action Area 7

Appropriate content & user experience

Action Area 5

Socialise and mobilise via network of networks

Action Area 8

Understand landscape of digital poverty in UK

SIGNPOST



[National DeviceBank](#)

Good Things Foundation



[National DataBank](#)

Good Things Foundation
Nominet
Virgin Media
Vodafone
Three UK

[Connectivity for Third Sector](#)
GoodCall Mobile



[National Tech Support](#)

Positive Transform Grp
Unisys
ServiceNow
Wavelength

[Digital Skills Helpline](#) –
0800 987 4110
We Are Digital
Vodafone

[Tech Support for the disabled](#)
AbilityNet



[Digital Confidence](#)

Scottish Tech Army
Sky



[Key Stage 3 OpenTech Skills](#)

OpenUK

[Online Centres Network \(Adults\)](#)
Good Things Foundation

[Digital Champions](#)
Digital Literacy Skills
Digital Unite

[Digital Education Resource Hub](#)
Tech London Advocates



[Career and Role Models in Tech \(School Children\)](#)
Tech She Can



[Online Safety](#)

Good Things Foundation



[Digital Inclusive Design Educational Toolkit](#)
BCS
Lloyds Bank Academy

[National Online Classroom](#)
Oak National Academy



[National Digital Poverty Alliance](#)

Digital Poverty Alliance

[BCS Digital Divide Specialist Group](#)
Digital Poverty Alliance

[#JoiningtheDots](#)
Community of tech communities



[UK Evidence Review](#)

Digital Poverty Alliance

[Consumer Digital Index and Essential Digital Skills](#)
Lloyds Bank

[Digital Youth Index](#)
Nominet

Creating Awareness – BCS Digital Divide SG Monthly Webinars



[Webinar: Closing the Digital Divide: Everything, everywhere by everyone](#)
23 May, 6:00pm



[Webinar: 7th Biennial International Conference on Access, Participation and Success](#)
26 April, 9:00am



[Digital Universities Week](#)
17 April, 6:00pm



[Webinar: Closing the digital divide: Fighting loneliness and digital equity](#)
13 April, 5:00pm



[Webinar: A framework for digital participation for all - Digital Divide SG](#)
16 March, 5:00pm



[Webinar: Closing the Digital Divide - Digital Divide SG one year on AGM](#)
23 February, 5:00pm



[Webinar: How we can fight the cost of living crisis using technology](#)
20 January, 12:00pm



[Webinar: Technology and Homelessness - Digital Divide SG](#)
15 December, 5:00pm



[Webinar: Digital Divide - growing or shrinking?](#)
8 November, 6:30pm



[Hybrid event: Closing the digital divide in Stoke-on-Trent: The Discover Digital Project](#)
1 November, 6:00pm



[Webinar: Digital participation for all. What we can do to support older people](#)
13 October, 5:00pm



[Webinar: Closing the Digital Divide. Help someone by becoming a Dementia Friend](#)
28 July, 6:00pm



[Webinar: Digital Inclusion - Why you should employ and retain people with Autism](#)
30 June, 5:00pm



[Webinar: Digital Poverty in the UK: What the evidence shows](#)
28 June, 1:00pm



[Webinar: Support Capability and Motivation - Fighting Digital Poverty](#)
21 June, 1:30pm



[Webinar: Communication, control, telepresence with severe physical challenges](#)
6 June, 6:00pm

Topics relating to personal issues and conditions

- Dementia
- Autism
- Loneliness
- Homelessness
- Visual Impairment
- Cost of Living Crisis
- Children in Care
- Elderly People

Topics relating to technologies that can help:

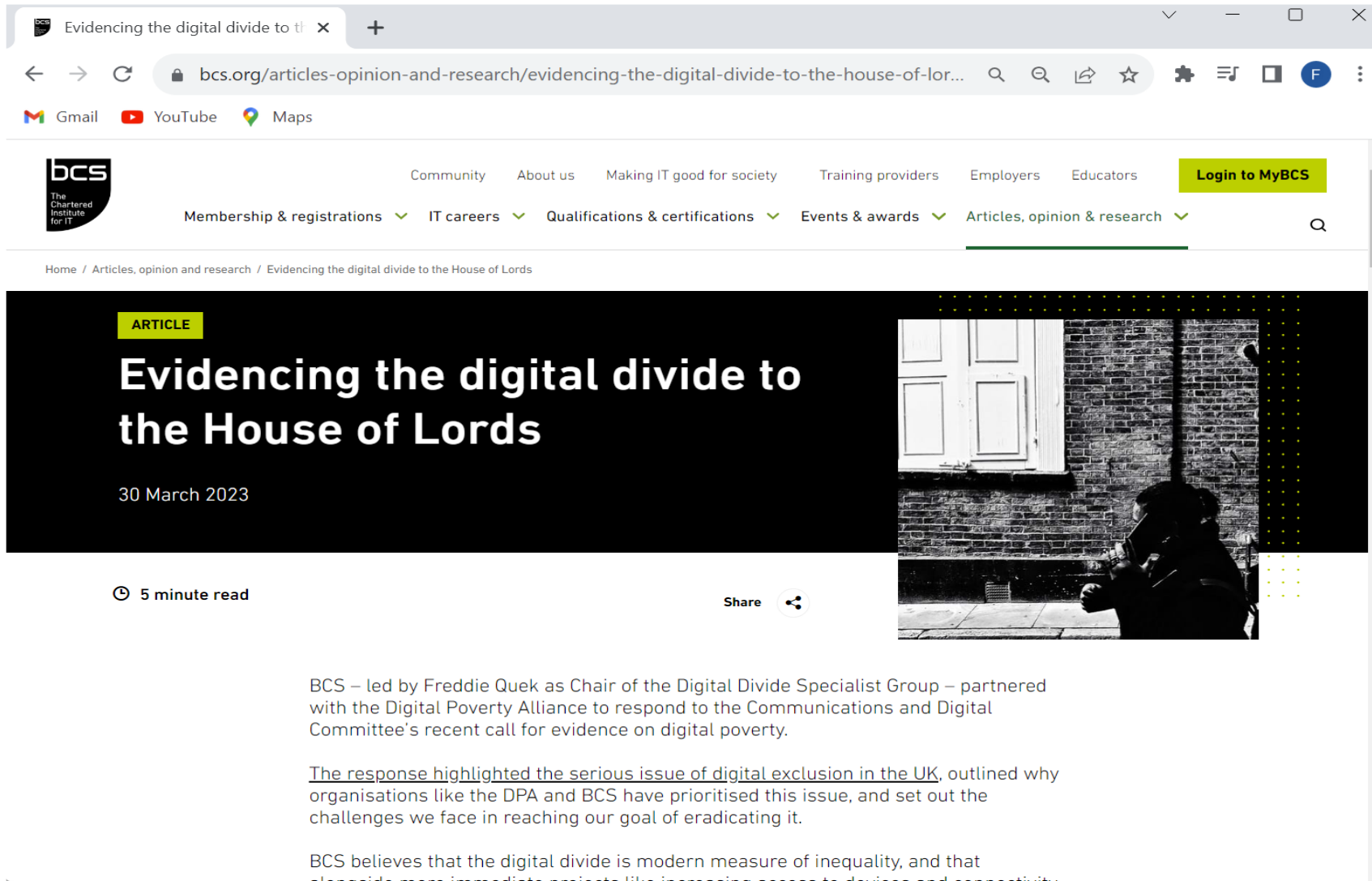
- Artificial Intelligence
- Virtual Reality
- Large Language Models and ChatGPT

Topics relating to learning from local/regional initiatives:

- Stoke-on-Trent
- Bath
- Sunderland
- Birmingham
- London
- Scotland

2023-04 Joined up Approach by UK tech sector

Joint DPA-BCS submission to UK Parliament, with support from Tech UK, WCIT and the 13 #Joiningthedots communities



The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the BCS website. The address bar shows the URL: bcs.org/articles-opinion-and-research/evidencing-the-digital-divide-to-the-house-of-lords. The BCS logo is in the top left, and navigation links like 'Community', 'About us', 'Making IT good for society', 'Training providers', 'Employers', and 'Educators' are in the top right. A search bar is also present. The main content area features the article title 'Evidencing the digital divide to the House of Lords' with a date of '30 March 2023' and a '5 minute read' indicator. A share button is visible. The article text begins with 'BCS – led by Freddie Quek as Chair of the Digital Divide Specialist Group – partnered with the Digital Poverty Alliance to respond to the Communications and Digital Committee's recent call for evidence on digital poverty.' and continues with 'The response highlighted the serious issue of digital exclusion in the UK, outlined why organisations like the DPA and BCS have prioritised this issue, and set out the challenges we face in reaching our goal of eradicating it.' The article concludes with 'BCS believes that the digital divide is modern measure of inequality, and that alongside more immediate projects like increasing access to devices and connectivity...'.

Home / Articles, opinion and research / Evidencing the digital divide to the House of Lords

ARTICLE

Evidencing the digital divide to the House of Lords

30 March 2023

🕒 5 minute read

Share

BCS – led by Freddie Quek as Chair of the Digital Divide Specialist Group – partnered with the Digital Poverty Alliance to respond to the Communications and Digital Committee's recent call for evidence on digital poverty.

The response highlighted the serious issue of digital exclusion in the UK, outlined why organisations like the DPA and BCS have prioritised this issue, and set out the challenges we face in reaching our goal of eradicating it.

BCS believes that the digital divide is modern measure of inequality, and that alongside more immediate projects like increasing access to devices and connectivity...

“Digital has moved from providing valuable services to an essential part of daily life. As such we need to ensure that everyone can and is able to access the digital services they need which is an essential part of the BCS’s purpose of ‘making IT good for society’.”

Rashik Parmar, Group Chief Executive of BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT

2024-04 HE Commission Report on Blended Learning

Digitally Enhanced Blended Learning - Leveraging Technology for Higher Education. The Higher Education Commission, co-chaired by [Lord Norton](#) and Kathryn Mitchell of [University of Derby](#) today launched this report at the [UK House of Lords](#). Report authored by [Alyson Hwang](#) of [Policy Connect](#), sponsored by [Jisc](#) and [ACCA](#).

Recommendation 3: HEIs should address digital exclusion for all students, taking both a top-down and bottom-up approach to proactively provide and communicate relevant support.

"I'd be inclined to emphasise "all" – my experience is that edge cases, such as foundation year students, part-time undergraduates, self-funded research students, tend to fall through the cracks."
[James Davenport](#), [University of Bath](#) and BCS Digital Divide Specialist Group



How you can help

Socialise, Mobilise, Action

Become Supporter

Join

BCS Digital Divide SG
Digital Poverty Alliance

Join the BCS SG
community and the
Digital Poverty Alliance
Community Hub to stay
abreast of news and
updates

Become Ambassador

Socialise

Signpost what you know
Get others to join

Signpost BCS and BCS SG
aim to help close digital
divide by 2030, working
closely with Digital Poverty
Alliance.
Encourage others to join

Pledge Action

Pledge

Give commitment to an
action area, initiative
that you want to help
with

Sign up to pledge your
time/resources to an action
area, initiative

Digital Poverty Alliance
National Delivery Plan

Support Action Area

Support

Be part of making things
happen in an action
area, initiative

Take action area or initiative
as an active team member
to make progress

Drive Action Area

Drive

Champion and drive an
action area, initiative

Lead an action area or
initiative

BCS Bristol and Bath
Branch