

RETHINKING NATIONAL POLICY APPROACHES TO DIGITAL CAREERS

Click Start is a nationally significant programme that has promoted social mobility by understanding and tackling barriers young people face when considering digital careers, particularly among those in under-represented groups. Click Start was designed to respond to challenges including:

- Nearly 1 million 16–24-year-olds in the UK are NEET or economically inactive¹
- £140 billion estimated economic cost of digital skills gap over 10 years²
- 21% of tech jobs held by women (79% male-dominated)³
- Significant under-representation of people of colour in digital sectors⁴
- Fragile talent pipeline restricting economic growth

This matters because:

- The technological revolution is transforming skills required for the workplace across ALL sectors
- Young people need digital skills + behavioural skills (resilience, adaptability) + support (wellbeing, employability) to thrive
- Underrepresented groups face barriers to social mobility despite talent and ambition
- Single organisations cannot solve this alone—partnership model is essential

What meaningful support looks like:

Over three-years with a £12 million investment, Nominet and the Institute of Coding (IoC) brought together employers, educators, and youth outreach organisations for the first time at scale to develop Click Start.



Nominet brought more than a quarter century of digital infrastructure expertise as guardians of .UK and £50 million+ social impact activities focused on young people & digital technology



IoC brought a proven track record with 1 million learners, 35 universities, 200+ employers and experience having designed 150+ digital skills courses

Click Start combined best in class education with proven social mobility support targeting two learner communities across the country:

Broad Support (University of Leeds and the Open University) delivered national online, self-guided digital skills and employability training to large numbers of learners (35,000) facing barriers related to gender, ethnicity, or caring responsibilities.

Deep Support (seven regionally based university-charity partnerships) combined intensive technical training with up to six months of one-to-one employment coaching, pastoral care and peer support for learners (1,500) facing deeper barriers such as poverty, disability, or long-term unemployment. These partnerships were specifically tailored to the individual needs across different underrepresented groups and localities.

Curricula ranged from foundational IT literacy to advanced cybersecurity, web development, data science and AI, including employability skills all developed with employer input to align with genuine labour market demand. A national marketing campaign — generating over 68 million advertising impressions and winning three industry awards — drove recruitment of the right learners at scale.

1 BBC News – Nearly a million 16-24 year-olds not working or in education (Feb 2026) <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c62gzl2yl24o>

2 Consultancy.uk – Digital skills gap could cost UK £141 billion in GDP growth (Oct 2018) <https://www.consultancy.uk/news/18895/digital-skills-gap-could-cost-uk-1415-billion-in-gdp-growth>

3 GOV.UK – Diversity in UK Tech (June 2025) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/diversity-in-uk-tech/diversity-in-uk-tech-executive-summary>

4 Diversity in Tech – Representation of BAME in Tech <https://www.diversityintech.co.uk/representation-of-bame-in-tech>

HOW & WHERE WE MADE A DIFFERENCE:

- £12 million programme investment over 3 years
- Courses delivered across South West, London, the North of England, Wales and Scotland.
- 9 university-charity partnerships participated
- 11 employers engaged via GetMyFirstDigitalJob
- Almost 40,000 young people supported
- More than 10,000 courses completed
- Almost 1,000 secured employment or further workplace and education opportunities

