



## **Children and Young People's views of Digital Britain: Report from a consultation with children and young people who work with the National Children's Bureau that took place on 17 April 2009**

### **1. Introduction**

On Friday 17 April 2009, 12 young people between the ages of 11 and 16, who are members of either Young NCB or one of NCB's Life Routes projects<sup>1</sup>, attended BERR's Digital Britain Summit and took part in their own consultation on the digital future of Britain.

In preparation for this consultation, NCB had prepared a very brief children's version of the Digital Britain interim report [attached as Appendix 1] and also used flip cameras to interview a different group of younger children to ask them two core questions:

- How do you use technology in your everyday lives?
- How will you use technology in the future?

An edited version of their responses was presented as a video loop at the opening of the Digital Britain Summit.

In addition, the young people were given the opportunity to interview industry professionals and regulators who were attending the Digital Britain Summit.

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### **2. Consultation with children and young people**

#### **2.1 Methodology**

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<sup>1</sup> **Young NCB** is a membership scheme that is open to all children and young people who are 17 or under and live in England or Northern Ireland. It is supported by the National Children's Bureau (NCB), and its work is guided by an Advisory Group of young people. **Life Routes** is a life skills programme funded by Nokia and managed by NCB that is in operation in four regions in England. It gives vulnerable young people aged 11 to 19 the opportunity to develop self-confidence and awareness of their own potential through project and team-based learning.

The children's version of the Digital Britain Interim Report was given to Nik Smith who coordinates the Life Routes project in Waltham Forest to discuss with his students the day before the Digital Britain Summit.

**Activity One:      *Introduction to topic***

Mary Tait from BERR gave an overview of her role in role in Digital Britain, and explained why the Government asked for children's input, and what they hope to get from the day. She had the children's version of the report available to assist the discussion if required.

**Activity Two:      *Speech by Peter Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform***

The young people went to listen to Lord Mandelson's keynote speech.

**Activity Three:      *What will life be like in the future?***

- The group of 12 young people was split into three groups of four. Each group was given a theme:
  - Inform
  - Educate
  - Entertain
- Each group was asked to think of at least three scenarios associated with each theme. For example, under educate, one might think being in a lesson and researching for a project. The Inform group might think of watching the news, working for a newspaper or telling people about a new youth club. The Entertain group might think of watching a film, playing Singstar or watching a sporting event.
- Each group was asked to focus on up to three of the areas they had been discussing. The facilitators encouraged each group to think about the small details that make up each activity. What does it actually involve? How do you get a ticket? How do you know when the train will come? and then relate those where possible to digital technology.
- Each group was asked to imagine they are living in Britain in 20 years time. They are living in Digital Britain where anything is possible. They can be as creative and "out-there" as they like.
- Each group recorded their discussions on flip chart paper, and some drew spider diagrams. During this session, facilitators circulated to make sure the young people were focusing on the technology that they use to support them in these activities.
- Each group spoke about what they had been discussing to the whole group and allowed others to ask questions. The aim was to pull out themes/trends and try to draw out reasons behind choices as well as looking at what the young people's priorities were.

**Activity Four: Interviews with industry professionals**

BERR staff had approached a number of industry professionals who were attending the conference in advance to confirm their willingness to be interviewed by the young people. The young people were shown the list and asked to choose to whom they might like to speak for 5 to 10 minutes. They were advised by the facilitators that they should interview in pairs.

The young people suggested a list of questions but in some cases prepared their own bespoke questions in advance. BERR staff located the interviewees over the lunch period, brought them into the meeting room and linked them up with the children who had asked to interview them.

NCB staff went around the room filming the interviews on flip cameras, and Life Routes staff recorded interview responses on paper.

**Activity Five: Panel session on creativity and digital content**

The young people joined the conference to listen to the panel session.

**Activity Six: Discussion of interview responses**

When they returned to the meeting room, NCB staff asked the young people what they'd heard and/or learned during their interviews and recorded the responses on flipchart paper. Each pair of interviewers had the opportunity to respond.

**Activity Seven: Final thoughts**

A brief session to thank the participants in the day, and ask for any final comments. The young people were also informed that their comments would be compiled in a report for BERR that would inform the final Digital Britain report. The flip camera sequences would also be compiled and submitted to BERR to support the written report.

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**3. Findings**

**Activities two and five – Speech by Peter Mandelson and Session on creativity and digital content:**

Several young people commented on the difficulty of the language being used by the speakers (which made the content inaccessible to them) and the fact that several people attending the Summit were either using their laptops and/or reading their emails while people were speaking. They compared that with the way in which they are not allowed to use their phones or laptops while in class.

### **Activity Three –What will life be like in the future?:**

#### **1. Inform:**

The group looked at what they use to access information:

- School (education) and teachers
- Magazines
- Posters
- News and newspapers
- Internet – websites, pop-ups, yahoo, facebook, MSN, youtube, google, wikipedia
- Television
- Library books
- Paper documents
- Members of the public

What did they expect/want to see in 20 years' time? They chose to focus on the internet and the Library.

In relation to the internet, they focused on the steps they had to take today to gain access: having a router or wireless capacity; having the computer or laptop and necessary software; gaining access by password; typing in the web address or using a search engine like google; accessing and using the website. In 20 years, the young people could imagine being able to use the internet through:

- Thinking about it – internet connection through “a chip in your ear”
- Confirming your identity with fingerprint identification or a barcode on your wrist
- Wearing special glasses that give you internet access

In relation to the Library, they again focused on the steps they had to take today to make use of it: taking the bus or walking to the library; checking in; finding the sections you're interested in by using signs or asking for help; finding the book you want; taking it to the counter; giving the librarian your card; leaving with the book.

In 20 years, the young people could imagine using a library by:

- Identification verification through fingerprint system
- Touchscreen catalogues
- Teleporting the books you name direct to you
- Touchscreen electronic books
- Electronic books that you can add your own comments to while you're reading them

#### **2. Educate:**

The group looked at 'educate' as a process, organizing their discussions under the following headings:

- Planning
- Design

- Lessons
- Research

Under each, they looked at what they used to do different things.

Planning – finding directions through mindmapping, creating time lines with Microsoft

Design – creating displays using photoshop, photos, videos

Research – using the internet to gather evidence (“anywhere, anytime internet!”)

Lessons – electronic whiteboard, cameras to take photos or videos

What did they expect/want to see in 20 years’ time? They chose to focus on mobile phone and computer technology.

- Voice activated instructions
- Automatic translation available in different languages that you would choose
- Finger print identity recognition (no more pin numbers)
- Faster internet
- Unlimited memory
- Wider area of bluetooth and faster bluetooth
- Teacher able to take control of mobile phone in a bluetooth area “like with our laptops”

### **3. Entertain:**

The group discussed how they currently used digital technology for entertainment, mentioning: films either in the cinema or on the internet; music either in concerts or through downloads; social networking sites (bebo, twitter, facebook, my space, MSN); and games (Nintendo wii, DS, Singstar on Play Station 2).

In 20 years’ time, they believed that gaming on computers would be voice activated, that games would be holographic and could be subject to commands given through a chip in your head. More people would be playing virtual games and be able to interact with them (reference to a more advanced version of wii gloves), which means that more people would be writing their own games.

Concerts and sports games could be watched on giant screens at either another stadium or smaller venues – that would save travel time and be less expensive. All tickets would be purchased online.

### **Activities four and six –Interviews with industry professionals:**

BERR had arranged for the following CEs to be interviewed by the young people (followed by quick description of area of expertise):

- Dan Hon, Chief Executive Six to Start (games)
- John Higgins, Director General Intellect (internet)

- John Fingleton, Chief Executive Office of Fair Trading (consumer protection)
- Ronan Dunne, Chief Executive Telefonica O2 UK (mobile phones)
- Jonathan Thompson, Director of Strategy Ofcom (consumer protection)
- Francesco Caio, Vice Chairman Nomura Europe (broadband)

This was the highlight of the day for the young people!

During the round-up of the interview responses, they reported on a number of areas that they had discussed, including:

- Why don't mobiles work on the underground?
  - It could be done, but the cost is too high to equip the trains, stations and tunnels to allow it. Plus too disruptive – they would have to close train stations, dig up the tunnels and insert the necessary wiring. They have tried to do it in Glasgow.
- Why does each phone have a different charger?
  - They could be standardized, but that means that the phone companies would make less of a profit. They make more money out of selling chargers and phone accessories. However, he said that in the future, there could be a single charger for all mobile phones. And that it's likely that there will be solar powered mobiles – greener energy use.
- Will we see more touch sensitive technology?
  - Yes, windows and phones could offer touch sensitive capability that would allow you to 'talk' to someone in China. This would also allow both people to see each other on screen as well as talk to each other – mobile video conferencing.
- Why do we have to pay for texts but not emails?
  - We do pay for emails, but as part of the broadband rates, not separately. Also they make money out of texts, but they might be free of charge in the future. That's because new phones like iPhone/Blackberry allow people to access emails, so texts may have to become free.
- What is the best way to protect consumers?
  - New dangers always arise as technology changes. Consumers and providers have to work together to find out what the major issues are and develop ways to tackle them (ie identity theft, stolen credit/debit card details, objections to google Streetsearch). The market will solve the problems. However, privacy remains a real concern for everyone.
- What will new search engines do?
  - There will be more and newer search engines that allow for more specialist searches built around personal preferences. Back to voice activated capability, google is looking at somatic searches. If someone asks 'What can I do about my headache?', the search engine would find an answer. Searches will be able to be made over twitter.
- What about safety issues – areas where mobile technology shouldn't be used?
  - Silent carriages on trains, hospital wards and petrol stations (to avoid interference with the equipment). May develop a technology that could

allow retailers, health workers to switch off mobile phones in a certain geographical area.

- Will the internet be made faster?
    - Yes, and that means it will be fast no matter how many people are trying to use it. However, that will cost more because the whole network needs to be upgraded. This has to happen in the UK because the industry is worried about overseas competition.
  - How will people access the internet in the future?
    - More people will be accessing the internet through their mobiles and on their televisions. And gaming consoles will be faster and cheaper.
  - Will games consoles be better?
    - Consoles won't be changing a lot, but the way in which people play games will become very different – more interactive, and more enabling the player to decide what will happen during the game.
  - Will people watch more television or online videos?
    - People will spend more time watching television online.
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### **Activity seven – Final thoughts:**

This is where the young people – the majority of whom have never attended anything like this before – commented on the difficulty/inaccessibility of the language used when they listened to speakers in the main conference. They described it as speaking 'in code'.

This is also where they spoke about the 'trap of new technology' when they noticed that several people attending the Summit were using their laptops or Blackberries during the speeches. A couple of the young people had said that they saw people using twitter or a social networking site, and that several others were checking, reading and responding to their emails.

They also commented on how they were struck by the predominantly white, suited, middle aged men make-up of the speakers and Summit attendees and asked why weren't there more women there, and more black people?

**29 April 2009**

**Compilers and Facilitators for the day:**

Lisa Payne and Sarah Chittenden  
National Children's Bureau

### Digital Britain: the Interim Report

#### Why the report?

We use technology in many different ways. We use it for information, we use it for education and we use it for entertainment. Technology changes very fast and things are always being developed and improved.

The Government wants to make sure that Britain has everything in place to be able to respond to the way technology changes. The Government also wants to make sure Britain leads the way in developing and using new technology.

The Government is writing a long report which will be published in May that explains what needs to happen, and how they intend to do it.

In the meantime they have written a smaller report that says what they are working on at the moment, and what they hope to have finished thinking about by the time they write the final report. This is the Interim Report.

#### What does the report say?

The Government says in the report that they want to do 5 things:

1. Upgrade and modernise digital networks. They mean wired, wireless and broadcast networks. Broadcast networks are things like TV and radio.
2. They want to attract people to invest money in Britain's digital content and services.
3. They want the UK to produce excellent quality content. They mean things like impartial news, discussions and analysis.
4. They want access to digital technology to be fair. They think everyone should have access.
5. More public services to happen online (for example, NHS Direct is a public service that is also online) and to allow people to interact with the Government online.

In this report, the Government has come up with 22 things they are going to do to make sure they achieve those goals. They have called them action points.

Here is a selection of the ones that are most relevant to you.

#### ***Action point 6e***

Get mobile phone companies to increase the coverage of mobile broadband services.

#### ***Action point 11***

The government is thinking about setting up a Rights Agency. This agency would try to encourage people to share copyright materials legally. The agency would try to find solutions to copyright problems so that it becomes harder to share things that are copyright without permission.

***Action point 13***

They are going to make it a law that means Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have to tell people they are breaking the law if they think they are sharing stuff that is copyright. For example if you downloaded a film on a peer to peer site and it was illegal to do so, your ISP would need to tell you this.

***Action point 16***

They will find out if it will be possible to create a second public service organisation that would provide competition for the BBC.

***Action point 17***

They will make plans for a Universal Service Commitment so that people who live in areas where there is no broadband at the moment will be able to get this by 2012. If this part of the programme gets agreed, this means at least 2Mb per second Broadband will be available everywhere.

***Action point 21***

They will make a Public Service Delivery Plan. This makes sure that public services that people access online will be easy to use by lots of different people.

***Action point 22***

They will work with other people to see if the National Media Literacy plan needs to be changed to make sure it reflects how technology is changing

Policy makers from BERR will be available to answer your questions on the day.