

PRESS RELEASE



20/01/2016



WATCH: A video of the launch event



VIEW: Pictures taken at the launch event

Halifax Champions Digital Skills in First Libraries Partnership

- **2,000 Halifax Digital Champions available to support free 'IT Taster Sessions' in all libraries across England, Wales and Northern Ireland**
- **Partnership aimed at helping almost six million adults in the UK who have not used the internet get online**

Halifax has teamed up with the Society of Chief Librarians to create a 'first of its kind' partnership aimed at helping the almost six million adults in the UK who have never used the internet to get online. Over 2,000 Halifax members of staff, who have pledged to be **Digital Champions**, will be available to boost the support of IT taster sessions. The Digital Champions will lend their help in addition to the current support provided through public libraries across England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The partnership, launched in Battersea library in London earlier this week, will be delivered as part of the Society of Chief Librarians Universal Digital Offer for Libraries. Their aim is to help people improve basic digital skills like getting online, sending emails, connecting with their families online or using social media for the first time. The sessions can be held either as part of a group or on a one-on-one basis and Halifax Digital Champions will be available to attend the libraries in support of the sessions.

Learning in libraries empowers people, helps develop confidence and provides unique opportunities to learn outside of formal educational settings. The public libraries network offers free access to the

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Internet for every member of the public and provides essential services for vulnerable members of society – the isolated, unemployed, elderly and people with disabilities. The government has also promised to get WiFi to 98% of libraries by March 2016, meaning that more people have access to the internet than ever before.

Peter McCarthy, Regional Director Greater London, Halifax said “We are delighted to be partnering with the libraries to support even more people gain the basic digital skills they need to benefit from being online. There are almost six million adults who have never used the internet. Working together we have the opportunity to make a real difference in helping people realise the benefits and, importantly, feel comfortable in doing so. It’s great to have such a tangible way for us to give back to the community and provide support for local people.”

Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy, said “Being internet savvy is absolutely essential in today’s society - whether that be through shopping online, using social media or simply sending an email. The IT Taster Sessions ran by the libraries, and supported by the Halifax Digital Champions, are already making an enormous difference to help people use the internet and give them the confidence to get online.”

Nick Stopforth, Society of Chief Librarians Digital Lead, said “This landmark project – the first of its kind in the country – has been achieved by dedicated and swift collaboration at both local and national levels, and demonstrates the ability of libraries and the private sector to respond to the challenge set in the Digital Inclusion Charter: to be collaborative and find new alternative ways of getting more people digitally skilled. We are confident that that through this partnership with Halifax, even more people will visit their libraries to go online, be confident online and stay safe online.”

About the sessions

People interested in taking part in an IT Taster Session should visit their local library and speak to a librarian to find out more. Sessions are run, at the library, on a first come first served basis and are free of charge. Sessions usually last between 60 and 90 minutes. Two to three sessions are usually run per week at each library. Learning at the sessions can include getting started on computers, using the internet, online shopping and banking, social networking and more besides. Halifax Digital Champions will be available to attend the libraries in support of the activity, boosting the number of sessions that can be run in the libraries.

Ends

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Notes to editors:

Halifax is playing a vital role in Lloyds Banking Group's broader push for financial and digital inclusion. Digital Champions are colleagues who pledge to improve the digital skills and financial capability of at least two individuals or organisations every year. There are over 2,000 Halifax Digital Champions and over 11,000 across the Group, with numbers growing all the time.

The partnership will go some way in helping the Group deliver its commitment, made within its 2015 Helping Britain Prosper Plan, that 20,000 Digital Champions will help people and organisations to improve their digital skills and financial capability by 2017. The Group is a proud founder partner of digital skills charity Go ON UK - which makes sure that communities and businesses are making the most of the internet.

Lloyds Banking Group works in partnership with the Tinder foundation, who help the Group with developing digital champions capabilities and provide access to a list of Online Centres in the region where our colleagues can volunteer to help clients.

Lloyds Banking Group sits on the Government Digital Inclusion Delivery board. The Government Digital Inclusion Strategy includes 10 actions which government and partners from the public, private and voluntary sectors will take to reduce digital exclusion. To that end, the Group worked closely with Go ON UK to help create their UK Digital Exclusion Heatmap, a ground-breaking mapping tool which aims to provide policy-makers and those working in the digital skills and inclusion sector with the insights to help drive engagement, action and funding where it is most needed.

Benefits of Digital inclusion:

- 81% of people say that being online helps them feel part of modern society (*Digital Unite, Digital can improve the lives of the over-55s*)
- 29% of people say that staying in contact with friends and family was one of the major reasons for getting online (*Carnegie Trust: Across the Divide, Tackling Digital Exclusion in Glasgow*).

Society of Chief Librarians

The Society of Chief Librarians (SCL) leads and manages public libraries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. SCL is made up of the head of service of every library authority, and advocates for continuous improvement of the public library service on behalf of local people. www.goscl.com. To find out your nearest library please use the [find a library website](#).

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To request an image please email the number of the image you would like to: Adam.Pledger@lloydsbanking.com and Philip.egar@lloydsbanking.com



Image one: Halifax Digital Champion, Shaun, and IT Taster Session instructor, Andrew, plan the morning's session



Image two: IT Taster session kicks-off



Image three: Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy, helps answer questions at the IT Taster session



Image four: Shaun, Halifax Digital Champion, helps make the complex clear at the IT Taster session



Ed Vaizey, Minister for Culture and the Digital Economy, meets Peter McCarthy, Halifax Regional Director and discusses the first of its kind partnership

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