

Building better digital lives

Investing... in skills for tomorrow

We want to help everyone make the most of technology and thrive in our increasingly digital world. We're empowering people with the skills they need today, for a better tomorrow.

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Our presence across the UK means that we have an opportunity – and a responsibility – to go further than ever to connect more people and businesses, help them make the most of technology and equip them with the skills they need both now and for the future. Through our new Skills for Tomorrow programme, we're going above and beyond to help UK families, communities and companies reach their full potential.



Marc Allera
CEO, Consumer



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Building better digital lives continued

Helping everyone make the most of technology

The challenges and opportunities of the digital world can be daunting, particularly as we live through such uncertain times. Technology is a powerful enabler, but many people lack the skills and the confidence to make the most of it in their home and work lives.

We're well placed to tackle this challenge with our reach, partnerships and strong track record on digital skills training. By building tech confidence, we can help to unlock the UK's potential.

We've broadened and deepened our commitment this year with the launch of our Skills for Tomorrow programme. It's designed to support communities across the UK – from schoolchildren, jobseekers and small businesses to older and more vulnerable members of society. We want to help millions of people, and we've already started.

BT has a critical role to play in connecting families and businesses through the Covid-19 crisis. And we're going beyond by enabling everyone to access free resources to help them learn how to use digital technologies and manage their lives online. We're working to increase our superfast and ultrafast broadband reach, along with 4G coverage and 5G roll-out to best enable those connections (see case study above).

Case study:



Connecting the UK to the future

Getting people connected is the first step to helping them make the most of technology. Our high-speed broadband reaches over 28m (87.8%) of all UK premises and Openreach's Gfast footprint now reaches more than 2.8m homes and businesses.

Around 600,000 premises in remote areas still lack any broadband connection and Ofcom has tasked us with delivering a minimum speed of 10Mbps to all premises across the country. Openreach has already connected more than 100,000 hard-to-reach homes and businesses through community fibre partnerships.

We're powering the UK's next generation mobile services, extending 4G coverage and switching on the first 5G connections. Our mobile network now covers 99.3% of the outdoor population of the UK.

Through the Shared Rural Network, we're partnering with other mobile operators, the government and Ofcom to extend 4G coverage to rural areas across the country by 2025 – whatever network provider people use. We're also continuing to build the UK's new network for emergency services.

 **See our Annual Report** for more on how we're extending connectivity.

Skills for Tomorrow

By 2025, we aim to empower 10m people by helping to give them the skills they need to flourish in the digital world.

We're partnering with some of the UK's leading digital skills organisations to offer everyone free access to the resources that work for them – either online or face-to-face. Our [Skills for Tomorrow online portal](#) is the gateway to free courses and guidance. It covers everything from getting started and staying safe online to digital skills for working lives.

We're also growing our long-standing programmes, such as Barefoot Computing in primary schools and Work Ready for young people. And we've launched new partnerships to sponsor over 90 Online Centres and support one million small business owners and their employees.

Bridging the tech divide will need a concerted effort by government, businesses and non-governmental organisations. We're a founding partner of [FutureDotNow](#), a new coalition of leading companies and NGOs working with the Government and others to boost digital skills.

We're also exploring ways to extend our impact beyond the UK through our partnerships in India and other key markets. Colleagues from across the business are sharing their expertise to help.



Poppy, a young coding enthusiast and Barefoot student, starred in TV commercials showcasing our vision for empowering people in a digital world.

Case study:

Record-breaking drone show goes beyond limits

Schoolchildren displayed their tech know-how at the launch of our new Beyond Limits brand in October 2019. Singer Jess Glynne headlined the event at London's Wembley Arena, but students from St. Joseph's School in Islington stole the show.

Applying coding skills learned in our nationwide Barefoot Computing programme, they helped create a synchronised performance by 160 drones that broke the world record for indoor drone displays.

At another Beyond Limits event, the iconic advertising screens at Piccadilly Circus lit up with images of avatars coded by schoolchildren.



Building better digital lives continued

Case study:



Supporting people and businesses through the Covid-19 crisis

BT has a unique role in powering the UK's digital infrastructure. So we have an essential part to play in keeping people and businesses connected through the global Covid-19 pandemic. We're coordinating with the UK Government, and we communicate local government guidelines in all the countries in which we operate globally, to support our customers, colleagues and local communities.

We're offering business customers additional support to help them stay operational and we have more than enough capacity in our UK broadband network to handle the massive increase in people working from home.

We've taken steps to protect our colleagues (see [page 32](#)) and ensure essential Openreach engineering visits can proceed safely to keep customers connected.

With large numbers of people practising social distancing, self-isolation or confined to their homes during the Covid-19 pandemic, it's more important than ever to ensure that those with low or no digital skills can keep in touch with family and friends, and access vital health services.

Our Skills for Tomorrow programme offers a wide range of free resources and information to help people build their digital skills and work online effectively wherever they are. Although face-to-face training has been cancelled during the Government-mandated lockdown,

the programme's 'digital first' approach means participants can still access extensive resources through the Skills for Tomorrow portal.

The portal includes key topics such as how to navigate the NHS website, how to access GP online services, how to make video calls, and how to do online shopping or banking. There are also engaging activities to help children develop their computational thinking skills and families learn how to stay safe online. We've launched webinars to provide advice and support for small businesses, jobseekers and teachers, and have shared regular tips and guidance on the digital skills people need to manage their lives and work online.

We've also made changes to our charges to support people through the crisis, including temporarily lifting caps on broadband use, enabling access to the NHS online without using data allowances and placing a £5 a month cap on call charges for our most vulnerable BT landline only customers.

In addition, we're partnering with the UK [National Emergencies Trust](#) that's been set up to support communities in times of greatest need. We'll help to fund the Trust's operations and offer support through the partnership, via our Skills for Tomorrow programme, to help people harness technology to remain safe, healthy, connected and resilient.

Partnering

With the UK National Emergencies Trust.

Temporary lifting of data cap

on broadband usage.

£5 a month cap

We've placed a cap on call charges for our most vulnerable BT landline only customers.

 [See our website](#) for the latest on BT's response to Covid-19.

Preparing children to succeed in a digital world

Two-thirds of children who started school in 2016 are likely to do jobs not yet invented. We're helping them gain the skills they'll need to think, learn and thrive in a digital world.

Our Barefoot Computing programme gives teachers the resources and skills to bring computing lessons alive. Run in partnership with Computing at School (CAS, part of the British Computer Society), the Barefoot website has been accessed by teachers from the majority of primary schools across the UK.

Fun and easy lesson plans and supporting materials, available online, show computational thinking doesn't have to be difficult. Lessons use real-world tasks like cracking codes and planning parties to teach logic, algorithms and other computational thinking concepts (see case studies on [page 10](#)).

Volunteers introduce these plans and concepts at workshops to build teachers' confidence in delivering the primary computing curriculum. Of the teachers attending Barefoot workshops this year, 95% said the experience made them more confident teaching computing.

Through Barefoot, we've trained more than 85,600 teachers and reached 2.8m children in the UK since 2014/15. We aim to increase this to five million as part of our wider ambition to reach 10m people with help to improve their digital skills by 2025.

Over 250 of our colleagues supported Barefoot this year by volunteering their time and technical know-how. We also enhanced training for our volunteers to help them add more value and get the most from the experience.

Building better digital lives continued

Up to now, Barefoot has focused primarily on computational thinking rather than computer programming. This year, we helped teachers take their programming skills to the next level. A network of 78 expert CAS ambassadors began introducing teachers to a wider set of digital skills, including computer programming skills, so they could pass these on to their pupils. Pilot workshops were held in schools and at local hubs run by the National Centre for Computing Education.

We've also added fun, interactive resources to the Skills for Tomorrow portal to help parents reinforce digital [learning at home](#).

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I'm married to a primary school teacher so I hear about the challenges teachers face in developing and delivering the computational thinking aspects of the curriculum. And I can see that BT has a massive opportunity to make a real difference. As a Barefoot volunteer, I get the chance to share my passion with others who want to learn. It's been great for my self-confidence and presentation skills, and I get a sense of genuinely leaving a positive mark on the generations to come.



Alistair McCormick,
BT software engineer
and Barefoot volunteer

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One of the challenges of teaching computing in schools is having the subject knowledge about how to use the technology, so we help teachers with that. Pupils get really excited about the prospect of being able to create games from scratch. When you introduce coding to them, they realise that it's an incredibly creative pursuit. We get fantastic feedback on the workshops because we know that we can help teachers teach computing.



Dr Jon Chippindall,
Barefoot ambassador and
primary school teacher

Getting young people ready for work

In comparison to 2018, by 2022 the UK will need half a million more workers in digital industries. Bridging this gap is vital to the country's competitiveness – and for companies like us that need tech talent. With youth unemployment stuck around 11%, compared with less than 4% for the general population, tech skills can offer young people a path to a brighter future.

Our Work Ready programme is designed to help. We work with 18 to 24-year-olds not currently in education, employment or training to empower them to take the first step on the career ladder. Participants learn digital and other key employability skills, and gain work experience to improve their prospects. This year, over 600 of them shadowed Openreach engineers, getting an insight into what it takes to keep Britain connected. We also offer Work Ready participants mock interviews, and advice on how to improve their CVs and promote themselves online.

Over 3,300 young people have graduated from Work Ready since the programme began in 2014 and 1,891 have gone on to further education, apprenticeships or jobs. Of these, 183 have landed full-time jobs with BT and others have taken up opportunities elsewhere. For example, one recent graduate is doing an apprenticeship with a Welsh local Council and another is studying cybersecurity at Aston University in Birmingham.

In 2019/20, 786 young people started Work Ready and 655 (83%) completed the programme – 258 of whom have already moved on into jobs or education. The charity Movement to Work named BT 'Employer of the Year 2020' in recognition of our results.

Case study:

Cracking codes, expanding minds

Barefoot students learned about code-breaking during the Second World War this year, retracing Alan Turing's footsteps to decipher submarine codes. Designed for pupils aged 9-11, the 'top secret' lessons including making documentary films and ended with a Code Cracking Cup competition. Students from the winning school won a VIP trip to Bletchley Park, home of the original WW2 code crackers.



Case study:

Lessons from life

Relating technology to children's everyday interests gets results. This year, Barefoot cooked up new lessons based on planning a pizza-making party. Pupils learned how data works by recording names, dietary requirements and pizza topping choices in spreadsheets. They then used this data to calculate ingredient quantities and baking times.

Another new lesson pack used sports to teach pupils data analysis, logical reasoning and debugging skills. Under-sevens corrected mixed-up uniforms of athletes from different nations and older students measured their sprints to carry out speed, distance and time calculations.



Building better digital lives continued

We're diversifying the Work Ready model, developing new partnerships to enhance the focus on digital skills and careers, and broadening the scope so we can help more people in different ways.

This year's pilots in Birmingham, Glasgow and London, led by more than 130 BT and Openreach volunteers, produced promising results. As part of the ten-day programme, young people were given the opportunity to work in a simulated tech start-up environment and gain insights into coding, user experience and managing online safety. They went on to develop inventive app prototypes, including one designed to connect lonely people to like-minded individuals doing the same commute and 'Glasknow' – a digital guide to exploring the city of Glasgow.

We are rolling out this successful model with events around the UK, prioritising disadvantaged areas where we can make the most impact. Work Ready will also play a role in BT's new 4-3-3 partnership (see box).

“ I think the programme is absolutely incredible. It gives young people who are about to embark on life in the workplace the skills and experiences they need to be ready to go and have an interview – and absolutely smash it to get their dream job.



Hayley Cassidy,
BT Work Ready volunteer

“ The training I received was very, very helpful. It helped me with my CV, my interview technique, the way I portrayed myself and communicated. It's real life skills that you need in the real world. I was nervous at first, but the mentor managed to break the ice. It's made me think of a long-term career and it gave me the opportunity to get where I am now.

Jordan George,
Work Ready graduate and
Openreach trainee engineer



Case study:

Combining the power of football and technology to change lives

BT's 4-3-3 partnership with football associations (FAs) in the home nations, will use technology, innovation and digital skills to help change the lives of millions of players, coaches and fans in footballing communities over the next five years.

Activities will boost support for grassroots, women's, and para and disability football. Building connected clubs and digital skills is a big focus. 4-3-3 will include access to Work Ready programmes for young people and support for small businesses, in partnership with the FAs, using football as a motivator.

Helping families build digital confidence

The pace of change in technology can be daunting for parents and raises concerns about what it means for their family. So it's not surprising that 74% want more advice to help keep their child safe online.

Case study:

Plusnet Plays on the Internet

Plusnet and Internet Matters partnered with children's author Konnie Huq to produce three original plays that use aliens and ghosts to get the message across on online safety.

Young actors from London's Chickenshed theatre brought the shows to life to highlight issues that they have experienced themselves and resonate with people their age – including cyberbullying, grooming and online reputation. The scripts, along with workshop plans and tips for schools, youth groups and parents, are available [online](#).

“ Sometimes it can be awkward speaking to my parents about internet stuff. These plays were so fun to act in and we realised that we actually had learned a lot about the internet...and aliens!

Marianna McInnany,
Chickenshed actor, aged nine



BT is a founding partner of child online safety organisation Internet Matters and our three consumer brands – BT, EE and Plusnet – are all supporters. Together, we promote activities to protect young people online, ranging from parental education to engaging children through theatre (see box).

With Internet Matters, we've made training and resources available via our Skills for Tomorrow portal to enable parents to build their confidence about the digital world and help their children navigate the internet safely. This includes tips on how to explain online risks to children and deal with sensitive topics like cyberbullying.

Parents can use the portal to find out how to set filters and controls to manage privacy, limit screen time and restrict access to inappropriate content.

“ Technology is a fantastic force for good when used responsibly. Therefore, it's essential parents are equipped with the necessary tools to give them the confidence to allow their children to explore all the benefits the online world has to offer. From parents to industry, we all have a role to play in creating a safe digital environment for children. Skills for Tomorrow marks Internet Matters' ongoing partnership with BT and highlights the importance of working together to help parents feel empowered to keep their children safe online.



Carolyn Bunting,
CEO, Internet Matters

Building better digital lives continued

We offer crash courses on how teens use technology – from social media and popular apps to gaming and livestreaming – and how to help them do so safely. And we plan to broaden resources for parents to include further information on supporting children’s wellbeing online.

We supported Safer Internet Day again this year. It’s a public campaign that aims to get people talking about using tech responsibly. On the day, we announced the launch of our new Set Up Safe service. This enables parents to set up spending limits and content locking for their children’s smartphones and offers recommended safety profiles for different ages. We’re also helping to protect children from online harm as a result of illegal activity (see [page 18](#)).

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I think it’s imperative that every parent takes a look at the [Skills for Tomorrow](#) portal if their children are on the internet. One really good tip was that unless you’re happy to walk around with whatever you’re putting on the internet on your T-shirt, for everyone to see, then don’t put it out there. The portal also suggested a family contract, which I thought was a great idea.

Nicki Mayer,
Mother-of-two



Tackling the digital divide

The digital world offers a wealth of opportunity. We want to make sure no one is left behind because they don’t know how to access it.

As many as 11.9m UK adults lack the essential digital skills needed for day-to-day life. Those who need most help getting connected – including older and more vulnerable people and those without internet access – are often isolated and don’t know where to start. Our research with the Oxford University Internet Institute found that non-internet users are 35% lonelier than those who are online and that 49% of retired people, who are especially prone to loneliness, are still offline.

We’re sponsoring face-to-face training sessions in local community Online Centres, coordinated by our partner, Good Things Foundation. We’ve launched training at 20 Online Centres this year and another 50 centres are in the pipeline. Each is partnered with our nearest store, contact centre or office which will provide volunteers, host events or offer other support. Openreach will be sponsoring training for an additional 2,500 people.

Trainers, many of whom are volunteers, deliver workshops with one-to-one support to help learners get to grips with basic tech skills. People who’ve never used a computer or sent an email can learn how. And learners are then able to use the online training content available on our Skills for Tomorrow portal to build on their new skills either at the centre or at home.

The portal offers free, easy-to-understand advice and resources to help everyone make the most of the opportunities of the digital world. Created by our partner, Good Things

Foundation, these ‘Learn My Way’ resources cover a wide range of topics – from staying in touch with family to online banking and shopping, and accessing services like the NHS online.

Over the next year, we plan to integrate information from Skills for Tomorrow into the advice that our contact centre colleagues provide to customers.

Our customer service teams and our 900 new Home Tech Experts, who visit homes to help set up devices, are able to support people with additional needs. For customers with disabilities, we offer accessibility advice and products through our [Including You](#) website. We also sponsor the annual Tech4Good Awards to promote accessible product development (see box).

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When you don’t know how to use technology properly, people just assume that it’s boring. Once you know it, it does become more interesting and you realise what you can do with it. It’s great that BT offers this opportunity to local communities to provide support for those who don’t know how to do it, or feel less confident, and to empower them. I feel like I am more confident now. The training is simple and easy and free.

Tarana visited her local training centre for help learning the basics.



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Good Things Foundation is thrilled to be working with BT to help fulfil our shared vision where everyone benefits from digital. The BT Skills for Tomorrow programme means Online Centres can provide more vital face-to-face support to enable 60,000 socially excluded people to gain essential digital skills and live more fulfilling lives.



Emma Ward,
Head of digital social inclusion,
Good Things Foundation

Case study:

Tech4Good award for schoolgirl’s invention

When nine-year-old Mihika Sharma saw a woman with sight loss stumble while crossing a road, she wanted to help. Her solution? To invent a next-generation smart walking stick that uses vibrating alerts, a water sensor, LED lights and a camera with artificial intelligence to track obstacles.

Mihika’s invention will enable people with sight loss to walk more safely and with greater independence. She was named the BT Young Pioneer at the 2019 Tech4Good Awards. Our experts are now helping her refine the smart stick, which operates using Bluetooth and GPS in mobile phones.



Building better digital lives continued

Supporting businesses in the digital economy

The UK's 5.6m small businesses are the engines of communities and the backbone of the economy. To continue to thrive as 5G coverage increases and tech becomes even more central to running a business, they need to know how to make the digital world work for them.

Yet many lack confidence in their economic prospects, particularly in a post Covid-19 world, and cite connectivity, employment costs and business rates among key concerns, according to the Federation of Small Businesses. In our own recent survey, almost three in ten small business owners said that getting the right digital skills was a key challenge for them in 2020. Almost half of those surveyed wanted BT to help provide training – and we're responding.

We're teaming up with partners like Google Digital Garage and LinkedIn Learning to offer free online and face-to-face training to people running and working in a variety of small businesses. By 2025, we aim to reach one million small business owners and their employees across the UK.

This year, we hosted five regional events in Birmingham, Bristol, Glasgow, London and Manchester. Hundreds of entrepreneurs learned tools and techniques for business success. Topics included digital marketing, online visibility, and using social media and data analytics to reach new customers.

We've also launched a new partnership with Small Business Britain (SBB) to work with, support and engage small businesses across the UK.

Tapping into SBB's local networks, we ran workshops and interactive webinars covering a variety of practical topics.

The daily demands of running a business can make it hard for time-pressed entrepreneurs to attend in-person workshops. Our Skills for Tomorrow portal, featuring content from expert partners, gives them access to practical training online.

Courses on launching, expanding and marketing a business empower users to compete successfully in the digital marketplace. We're also creating new content on critical topics like cybersecurity to help businesses protect their staff, customers and data online.

“ BT is going further to support small businesses. We're not just meeting their connectivity needs, we're also offering free support to help small businesses understand what technology can do for them and to improve their digital skills. This is good for them, good for national productivity and good for BT.



Gerry McQuade,
CEO, Enterprise

“ I manage a small business. I'm not very tech savvy and I thought the trainers explained it really well to a lot of different people of different ages. They were really helpful looking at our individual website afterwards to help us improve. Our social media has boomed since and we were trending at one point, which is brilliant. It feels really good to know that our business is reaching all sorts of places that we never thought it would before.

Lana Andrews
Assistant manager of her family pub and Google Digital training attendee



Using our global reach to boost digital skills

We recognise that the need to build digital skills resonates globally and we're working with partners to extend our support beyond the UK. In India, one of our key international markets, our ongoing efforts to empower the next generation (see box on [next page](#)) won the Social Impact Project of the Year at the 2019 UK-India Awards.

Resources offered through our Barefoot programme are gaining popularity internationally, with people from all around the world downloading lesson plans and materials. We're now exploring how to make this successful model available beyond the UK so more children can benefit.

This year, we began two new initiatives with Unicef. In South Africa, we aim to embed science, technology, maths and digital skills development in primary schools through the Technokidzz programme by establishing robotics hubs for teachers and students. And in Brazil, we're focusing on digital skills development for young people and helping them become social innovators in their communities.

In Australia, we've partnered with the Government and major banks to fund lessons on cybersecurity for teenagers to help equip them for a career in this understaffed industry. We're also sharing learning and best practices with other businesses to help young people around the world prepare for work as part of the Global Alliance for YOUTH, led by Nestlé.

Building better digital lives continued

Case study:

Empowering India's next generation

Around 150m school-age children in India are illiterate, contributing to a youth skills crisis. We're partnering with the British Asian Trust (BAT) to help meet this challenge.

Launched in 2018/19, the programme harnesses technology to break down social barriers and improve students' health, education, life skills and economic prospects. Its prime focus is to empower over 100,000 adolescent girls through tech-enabled interventions within schools and communities.

We're also backing the Quality Education India Development Impact Bond (DIB) led by BAT in collaboration with the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation and UBS Optimus Foundation. The DIB aims to improve learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy for more than 200,000 children aged between five and 13 across four Indian states, most from marginalised or migrant families. In its first year, the DIB has already reached over 100,000 girls and boys and enabled 30% more children to achieve basic education skills.

In a separate programme with our long-term partner Katha, we've helped 200 young adults in India train as digital entrepreneurs. Using their new skills, they've developed an interactive tech platform to reach an anticipated 300,000 more young learners as well as educators in schools, libraries and other learning centres.

BT people contribute their skills and time by volunteering locally on BAT programmes and continue to support other organisations that they themselves have ties to.



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Hundreds of millions of people will need to be upskilled and reskilled across the globe over the next decade. BT aims to empower the next generation by equipping young people with the skills to succeed in a digital world and harnessing the power of technology to reach some of the world's most marginalised groups. Collaboration will be key. That's why we're mobilising colleagues, aligning with customers and investing in community partnerships around the globe.



Bas Burger
CEO, Global

Partnering with charities

We're working with charity partners to use the power of technology to improve lives in the UK and beyond – supported by volunteers from across the business.

We've used our technology and expertise to help generate over £700m for good causes since 2012/13, and £55m this year alone. BT colleagues are leading the charge, donating over £13.5m through payroll giving in the last five years, and we've topped this up to over £17.5m. This year, over 1,400 individual charities were supported – and BT were recognised with a National Payroll Giving Excellence Award for Most Sustained Scheme in 2019.

More than 13,500 (15%) of our colleagues volunteered their time and expertise to help out this year – an enriching experience both for the beneficiaries and for our volunteers (see quotes on [pages 10 and 11](#)).

This year, we channelled our fundraising and volunteering support towards our long-standing charity partners and new initiatives that reinforce our Skills for Tomorrow focus.



- Our Consumer teams have an ambition to raise £225,000 for Sport Relief and the BT Supporters Club raised £1.8m for Comic Relief projects, including an app to make lessons more engaging for children struggling at school.
- Colleagues made strides in the year-long BT Walk for Unicef, raising £22,800 to help give young people the skills they need for a successful future, and our Gradventure volunteer fundraiser brought in nearly £26,000 more.
- Colleagues volunteered for TeenTech's programmes with young people and we supported the [Digital Skills TeenTech Award](#) with BT.
- We launched a new partnership with the Rio Ferdinand Foundation to help young people in Greater Manchester gain digital and employability skills.
- Openreach colleagues raised over £55,000 for SSAFA, the armed services charity, with 18 hardy volunteers leading the way on a sponsored trek in Morocco.
- Food collections at our buildings across the UK stocked food banks for our neighbours in need through the Trussell Trust.

We plan to encourage more colleagues to give their time in support of Skills for Tomorrow programmes and partnerships in future.