

Building Digital Readiness and Tackling Digital Poverty in Oxfordshire

By combining Intel® Skills for Innovation with a youth work approach, Oxfordshire Youth, Intel and Insight have partnered to launch the Digital Natives Project to expand digital readiness among young people facing economic disadvantage in Oxfordshire.

Oxfordshire Youth is a dedicated and highly professional youth development charity working directly with young people aged 8-25 years, and the grassroots leaders, volunteers, and youth organisations that support them. With over 75 years of expertise, we are doing whatever it takes to ensure that wherever a young person's starting point in life may be, or whatever challenges they face, they have the skills, support, and connections to thrive.

Oxfordshire

The project targets young people aged 11 - 21 living in OX4 and other areas of Oxfordshire experiencing higher levels of deprivation. The pandemic and cost-of-living crisis severely exacerbated socio-economic disadvantage across Oxfordshire, with 1 in 5 children living in poverty.

Equipping young people with digital skills and exposing them to technologically innovative environments is a powerful way that we can tackle this inequity, and use the data and evidence of impact to grow successful models of engagement with youth.

Digital Natives

A digital native has grown up in a world surrounded by technology and digital tools: it has always existed for them. However, not all digital natives, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, have access to the resources, training, or opportunities needed to fully harness the potential offered by digital tools and technology.

The Digital Divide

A survey by Oxfordshire Youth among 341 students in years 7, 8 and 9 in OX4 found that while 90% have their own smartphone, only 30% have access to a shared computer or laptop, with 9% having no access to any laptop or computer at home.

Many young people with access to smartphones are capable of using them for a range of purposes, but there are issues with the suitability of this device in terms of access, confidence and skills as they progress through secondary school.

Young people who are seen to be “always on their phone” face the assumptions that as digital natives, they will have functional skills needed on other digital devices. However, they may struggle with basic skills and face significant disadvantages at school and moving into the workplace.

80% of homework is only accessible online. For a young person already struggling with the impacts of living in poverty, the digital divide may translate into arriving at school with incomplete or missing work, falling behind in their learning, manifesting too often in anxiety and behaviour challenges, and contributing to absenteeism (ICT Teacher in OX4).



- More than 1 in 4 of pupils do not use a laptop or computer, to complete their homework.
- 6% of students do not have access to wifi at home.





Above: Two young women enjoying what they created during the project



Above: Two young men recording on a green screen



Above: Digital Skills Coordinator leading a sessions about Green Screens

Using the Skills for Innovation Starter Pack “The Green Screen Newscast”, young people created their own newscast to feature in a website they created on a topic they felt passionate about.

**“I felt a 3.6 out of 10 using technology before the week.
The best bit for me was learning how to edit videos and use a green screen”
(12 years old)**

What did they do?

Youth Work

- Building their own website
- Green screen video editing
- Creating a game for their website
- Visiting and connecting with a local business to see how Artificial Intelligence and tech is powering their work
- Using Virtual Reality headsets to create augmented reality experiences

Youth Work is a distinct educational process adapted across a variety of settings to support a young person's personal, social, and educational development.

It aims to support young people to “explore their values, beliefs, ideas, and issues; enables them to develop their voice, influence, and place in society; acquires and/or facilitates the learning of a set of practical or technical skills/competencies that enable them to realise their full potential.” (National Youth Agency).



Ebon Group

Ebon Group is an Oxfordshire-based company that develops automotive software solutions, and works across the globe. They were excited to share their work with young people and bring technology to life. The team showcased how an interest in technology can manifest in future careers in different ways.

On day four of the Digital Futures workshops, the young people visited local automotive business Ebon Group. Ebon Group's senior leaders committed their time to instilling in young people the power of innovative technology at work across product design, production and human resources.

Above: Young people holding a state of the art drone created by Ebon Group

Equipping young people with digital skills and exposing them to technologically innovative environments is a powerful way that we can tackle social inequity. By connecting interests in design and gaming to using technology to solve problems, the team at Ebon Group gave young people with a different insight into how technology functions in the workplace.



Above: Young people & Ebon Group staff engaging in team building activities



Above: Young people speaking with Senior Leader at Ebon Group

“Before I first came I felt very confident using computers. I feel much more confident in AI now. I think that it will help me in the future as I want to be a programmer or designer.”
(13 years old)

“My favourite part was going on the trip.”
(13 years old)

Ebon
GROUP

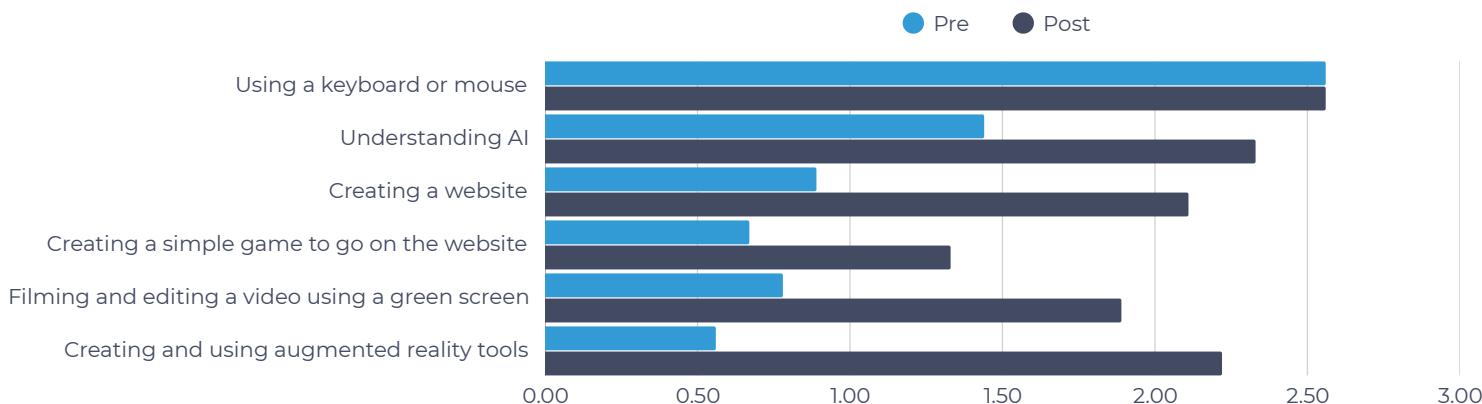


Impact

Young people who attended the Digital Futures Workshops completed pre and post evaluation surveys to measure their digital skills and confidence.

We saw an increase in self-reported digital skills levels after the workshop across understanding AI, creating a website, creating games, filming and editing and augmented reality tools.

Self-reported skills levels pre and post workshop



What did young people say about the week?

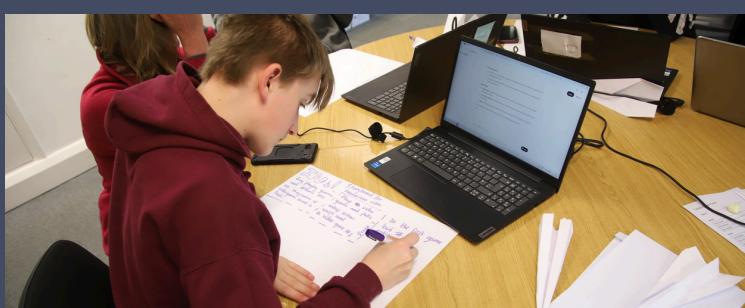
- 100 % said it helped them feel more confident working with others
- 100% said it let them meet and make friends with new people
- 90% said it gave them new opportunities
- 90% made you feel more confident using technology to express themselves
- 100% said it taught them new digital skills
- 90% said it had shown them different ways you can use technology

“This week has been amazing and exciting, I have learned coding, creating games, video editing, and filming” (15 years old)

“This workshop has really helped me to understand tech more. I have never done stuff like this - it’s skills for life because, you know, tech keeps on growing every day. I’m thinking of starting up my own website now”
(15 years old)

“The highlight of the week was the week itself. If I had not come to this workshop, I would have not done anything else than study this week.”

Workshop participant



The combination of youth work and Intel’s SFI allowed us to provide young people with a safe and enriching experience, allowing them to try new things and learn new skills.