# Go ON UK Evidence submission for the CWG-Internet Online Open Consultation on Access to the Internet for Persons with Disabilities and Specific Needs

## Introduction

Go ON UK is the UK’s leading digital skills charity. Founded in 2012 by our Chair, Martha Lane Fox, we actively seek out and work with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors to identify opportunities and develop programmes that improve Basic Digital Skills among people and organisations across the UK.

## Background

According to the latest ONS figures Disabled people are far less likely to the user the internet (68%) compared to non-disabled people (92%) across every age bracket. [[1]](#footnote-1) The most recent Oxford internet institute puts these figures at over half (51%) of people with a disability using the Internet. This is a rise of 11 percentage points from 2011 (from 40% to 51%). However the report states that the 51% is still considerably less than the 84% of non-disabled respondents who do use the Internet[[2]](#footnote-2).What both these pieces of research highlight is the clear digital divide for disabled people.

Interestingly though, in a recent survey by Lloyds Bank looking at digital and financial capability, just 6% of those surveyed responded that a disability was the reason they weren’t online. This could point to other factors being involved in this issue.[[3]](#footnote-3)

## Barriers to digital inclusion for disabled people

### Skills

Currently Go ON UK does not track disability alongside our measure of Basic Digital Skills, however we can draw some correlation from similarities in demographics for those who are disabled and those lacking Basic Digital Skills. Recent research by Ofcom into disabled consumers’ use of communications services[[4]](#footnote-4) highlights a strong correlation between disability and age. Around a quarter (23%) of disabled consumers were aged 75+, compared to 6% of nondisabled consumers. Similarly our research shows that digital skills levels starts to decline amongst the 45+ demographics, culminating in the 65+ groups having a Basic Digital Skills level of 43%.[[5]](#footnote-5)

We also see similar commonalities with lower socio-economic groupings, with disabled people more likely to live in DE households (37% vs. 25%), and people with learning disabilities reporting highest proportion living in these households (45%)[[6]](#footnote-6). Similarly, our own research shows that just 57% of DE households have all five Basic Digital Skills, compared to 90% of AB households.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Research from the Oxford Internet Survey 2013 also shows that disabled Internet users score lower than non-disabled people across a number of measures of positive technology attitudes and skills.[[8]](#footnote-8)

### Cost

Research has shown that disabled people pay on average an additional £550 per month on extra costs related to their disability. In addition to this, 19% of households that include a disabled person live in relative income poverty (below 60% of median income), compared to 14% of households without a disabled person.[[9]](#footnote-9)

Device cost, and the availability of free skills training could therefore be a significant issue for disabled people. The broader importance of this barrier can be seen in research by Lloyds bank which showed that amongst the over 60’s, over quarter (26%) stated that cheaper costs would help them get on the internet.[[10]](#footnote-10)

### Access

Internet access among disabled consumers is significantly lower than for non-disabled consumers. Whilst we have seen increases over recent years, access remains lower among disabled consumers (65% overall) than among non-disabled consumers (88%). This has been shown to be even higher for those with multiple impairments, with levels of access at 49%.[[11]](#footnote-11)

This is clearly then a significant issue that must be addressed, alongside ensuring that everyone has the skills to effectively engage with digital once that have the right access.

## Targeting and intervention

### Wider literacy and numeracy support

Disabled adults are nearly 3 times as likely as non-disabled adults to have no formal qualifications, 30% and 11% respectively[[12]](#footnote-12), therefore attention must be paid to ensuring that users are comfortable with this before they can engage fully with digital skills.

### Mobile/non-traditional devices

As many users in this category may not have traditional devices such as laptops, it’s important to offer different devices and be able to show the capabilities of various platforms.

### Flexible support networks

The availability of ongoing support beyond single sessions for skills and device familiarity. This will ensure that users achieve the full range of benefits that digital can offer.

### Low cost, low commitment access

Traditional 12 month broadband contracts and desktop PCs will not always be either affordable or suitable for this those with additional financial commitments, something we see in the statistics around the barriers to inclusion.

1. [ONS Internet Users 2015](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/rdit2/internet-users/2015/stb-ia-2015.html) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [Oxford Internet Survey 2013 Cultures of the Internet: The Internet in Britain](http://oxis.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2014/11/OxIS-2013.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index 2016](http://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.asp) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. [Ofcom, Disabled consumers’ use of communications devices, October 2015](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/1515282/Disabled_consumers_use_of_communications_services.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [Go ON UK Basic Digital Skills UK Report 2015](https://goon-uk-prod.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/uploads/Basic%20Digital%20Skills_UK%20Report%202015_131015_FINAL.pdf?utm_source=insights%20page&utm_medium=bdsresearch&utm_campaign=insights) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [Ofcom, Disabled consumers’ use of communications devices, October 2015](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/1515282/Disabled_consumers_use_of_communications_services.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. [Go ON UK Basic Digital Skills UK Report 2015](https://goon-uk-prod.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/uploads/Basic%20Digital%20Skills_UK%20Report%202015_131015_FINAL.pdf?utm_source=insights%20page&utm_medium=bdsresearch&utm_campaign=insights) [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. [Oxford Internet Survey 2013 Cultures of the Internet: The Internet in Britain](http://oxis.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/43/2014/11/OxIS-2013.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [Papworth Trust, Disability in the United Kingdom](http://www.papworthtrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/UK%20Disability%20facts%20and%20figures%20report%202014.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. [Lloyds Bank Consumer Digital Index 2016](http://www.lloydsbank.com/banking-with-us/whats-happening/consumer-digital-index.asp) [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [Ofcom, Disabled consumers’ use of communications devices, October 2015](http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/media-literacy/1515282/Disabled_consumers_use_of_communications_services.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. [Papworth Trust, Disability in the United Kingdom](http://www.papworthtrust.org.uk/sites/default/files/UK%20Disability%20facts%20and%20figures%20report%202014.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-12)