# EMBARGOED : 0001 Weds 28 April

# Skills for work charity launches [White Paper](#) with £2m commitment to address the growing digital divide and level up learning.

*April 28 2021 – Ufi VocTech Trust ("Ufi"), the UK charity working to scale up the delivery of adult vocational skills through digital technology, today announces its VocTech Challenge 2021 White Paper, detailing commitment of £2m for grant funding, best practice sharing and sector partnerships to unlock the potential of digital technology.*

Ufi VocTech Trust, the UK's leading charity for championing the power of technology to improve skills for work, today announces its Vocational Challenge White Paper. The White Paper is the culmination of three months of dialogue with the vocational education and technology sector, and follows on from the VocTech Challenge [Green Paper](#) and [consultation period](#).

At the heart of the design thinking process behind the Green Paper and White Paper is a focus on learners who are disproportionately impacted by the digital divide and absolute and relative digital exclusion.

The Green Paper identified 5 problem definition areas;

1. **Technology** – Technology is a critical issue for those most at risk from being excluded from training. There is a significant equity gap that threatens the chances of "levelling up".
2. **Learner confidence** - Confidence to engage with learning has dropped and this has been compounded by a lack of motivation.
3. **Digital skills** - There is generally a lower level of competence in learner groups most likely to be negatively impacted by the pandemic which blocks access to, and engagement with, many learning opportunities.
4. **Social and practical learning** – Personalised learning too often gears towards individual effort, without regard for a learner community and culture, or social learning factors.
5. **The VocTech Marketplace** - Funding based on time and attendance, rather than acquisition of skills and a lack of support for the sector to manage innovation.

The White Paper addresses these, by announcing a commitment by Ufi VocTech Trust to;

1. **A Learner Confidence & Motivation Grant Call:** A targeted grant call on how VocTech can solve issues around confidence to create a step-change so that increased learner confidence and motivation leads to better outcomes for the learner, for the employer and for society as a whole.
2. **"What Works" Pilot Projects & Research for Under Served Learners:** Work in partnership to commission pilot projects and research to support innovation and investment in the most underserved communities of learners to help reduce the digital divide and encourage the adoption of 'what works' through demonstration and showcasing.
3. **Advocacy:** Advocate for change and support other organisations to tackle some of the underpinning wider societal challenges, including the importance of quality resources and CPD for vocational training.

The White Paper comes at a crucial time for UK skills development, and provides focused solutions for those learners who, without positive intervention, will struggle to get the skills they need to work or progress in employment[1].

Dominic Gill, Chair of Ufi VocTech Trust's Board of Trustees said:

> *"We are hopeful about the tech enabled future of learning and this White Paper sets out the role that Ufi can play, as well as our asks of partners, in ensuring a better, fairer future. A future that is possible through VocTech."*

Rebecca Garrod-Waters, Chief Executive Officer, Ufi VocTech Trust said:

> *"Ufi has a really clear role to play in supporting technology that can benefit the hardest hit. This White Paper sets out the ways in which we will work over the next 12 months to best align our funding and resources to focus on preventing the skills and life chances catastrophe that is threating so many.*
>
> *There remains a wider context of socio-economic issues that we cannot tackle ourselves but are fundamental to the long-term success of our mission - in this latter area, we offer our relentlessly practical approach to demonstrating what 'good' looks like, so that policy makers and those with wider responsibilities can use our community and our thinking to help to shape future actions themselves."*

ENDS

**Notes to Editors**

- Link to White Paper
- Link to Green Paper
- Link to Consultation

For more information about Ufi, the projects we have supported and to arrange interviews please contact media@ufi.co.uk

- Ufi VocTech Trust supports the delivery of adult vocational skills through digital technology and our aim is to use our funding to catalyse change across the UK so that significant scale can be achieved in digital vocational learning for adults.
- We believe that the UK needs to accelerate the number of people accessing learning and gaining vocational skills to enable UK industry to compete in the global economy. As a funding organisation we believe that can be achieved using digital technologies.
- Our focus is on the utilisation of technology to help adults gain the skills needed for work. This includes supporting learners as they move through their careers, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, and skills development in ways that fit around work and life commitments.
- Digital technology can change the way that we access learning so that more people are able to develop their skills. We see digital technology offering increased flexibility, new approaches to learning, new ways of accrediting learning, new distribution models and new relationships with learning providers.
- A strong vocational technology community is fundamental to the growth and development of adult skills. We will continue to build links within the community, strengthening opportunities for investment and showcasing the art of the possible.
- Ufi VocTech Trust is committed to promoting and funding digital technologies to achieve a significant increase in the scale of adult learners gaining vocational skills.

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[1] https://www.goodthingsfoundation.org/sites/default/files/blueprint-for-a-100-digitally-included-uk-0.pdf