



Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies Annual Report 2019-20



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Foreword

We are delighted to present this combined 2019-20 annual report on our Social Mobility Strategy 2018-28 and Digital Skills Strategy 2018-23.

2019 may now seem a long time ago, but it is fitting to highlight some of the outstanding work done to progress the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies by our staff and partners prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, and to thank them for their continued commitment. COVID-19 has caused severe disruption to UK businesses and public services, including for our residents, students and workers in the Square Mile. Sadly, the pandemic has been a major set back for social mobility and increased the digital divide. Enabling fairer access to skills and employment has never been more urgent and critical.

The economic impacts of COVID-19 have also had a significant negative effect on the ways in which we, with our partners, work to promote social mobility and digital skills, such as closures and the shift to virtual provision at schools, the Barbican Centre, the Museum of London, and our other cultural institutions.

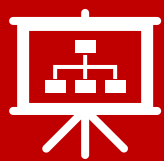
We have had to become more resilient and adaptable when delivering our strategic activities, making use of online tools instead of face-to-face interactions. This new approach has presented both challenges and opportunities in terms of delivering both strategies, and has raised digital inclusion as a key focus area. These challenges have been an opportunity to broaden our reach into all aspects of social and digital inclusion, taking into consideration mental and physical wellbeing and seeking to overcome inequality for people with protected characteristics. We have done this by targeting those audiences who are most at risk, such as young care leavers and older people without digital skills, and expanding our collaboration with external partners in government and industry to overcome resource constraints.

To maximise our impact, we have started combining our efforts across these two strategies and linking them more closely with our other work to contribute to a flourishing society. Digital skills can act as an enabler and present an opportunity to overcome some of the challenges of social mobility. Having the right digital skills is particularly important as those without the necessary digital skills are more likely to find themselves without a job, or with fewer job prospects. By harnessing the interaction between digital skills and social mobility we can enable a workforce that is prepared for the future market and support greater economic inclusivity. The main benefits to moving towards this new approach are that this will preserve and redirect resources to the COVID-19 recovery effort, promote more streamlined ways of working and will encourage strategic synergy with [our Corporate Plan](#).

Alderman Sir Peter Estlin
Lord Mayor of London 2018-2019

Catherine McGuinness
Chair of the Policy and Resources Committee

John Barradell
Town Clerk and Chief Executive



Annual Report 2019-20

Executive Summary

What do we mean by Social Mobility and Digital Skills?

Social mobility is the ability and opportunity for individuals, families or groups to progress within a society to reach their full potential – in terms of income, education, employment, perceived social status, housing and place/postcode.

Digital skills are the set of skills, attitudes and values which will enable people to thrive and flourish in current and future digital environments.

Why this needs highlighting

Social background is not currently a protected characteristic under the definitions set out in the Equalities Act 2010. Organisations can appear to be diverse and may be able to demonstrate that they comply with the Equalities Act 2010 without giving people with similar potential but from different socio-economic backgrounds equal chances to succeed.

Household income is the key determinant of whether a person has access to the internet and the opportunity to develop the digital skills that are needed to be included and thrive in 21st century society.

As with the characteristics protected in the Equalities Act 2010, we see differences in how people progress and need to delve into personal experiences, organisational processes and data to gain insight into why and how this happens in order to work out how to change it.

What this report covers

This report shares the key highlights, case studies, performance data and partnerships that are involved for each of the City of London Corporation's (the 'City Corporation') Social Mobility Strategy's four outcomes and the Digital Skills Strategy's three priorities. It recognises our achievements for the year September 2019 to September 2020, the learnings from the COVID-19 crisis and reaffirms our commitment to the Social Mobility Strategy 2018-28 and the Digital Skills Strategy 2018-2028. This report combines the annual reporting for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies, reflecting the strong links between the strategies and using our resources more efficiently.

Given the period covered, this has been a year of two halves. Whilst digitally enabled economies and communities adapted quickly, others did not and many are suffering the effects of being disconnected.

Social Mobility Strategy – at a glance

For the first half of the year, we focused heavily on working with young people, particularly through our cultural and educational outreach work. This year, the Culture Mile School Visits Fund continued to provide access to schools with high levels of disadvantaged to cultural learning in the City and beyond. We hosted the Social Mobility Commission's Employer toolkit launch, Tomorrow's Company's first Financial Inclusion Summit and the launch of the Bridge Group's Social Mobility Research.

For the second half, our focus shifted to alleviating the negative effects of COVID-19 on social mobility. The Culture Mile School Visits Fund shifted to the provision of hardcopy Play Packs distributing through food banks for children and families to engage in cultural and creative learning at home. Our achievements also included the delivery of a Virtual London Careers Festival, a move towards blind recruitment and a strong focus on apprenticeships. Our key lesson learned is that we need to adapt our activities so that they are more resilient within the context of COVID-19 and its wide-reaching economic impacts.

Overall, we delivered 23 out of the 69 actions set out in our action plan against our four outcomes, with a further 44 actions either on track or ongoing. Collectively, we have had a strong year, despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Digital Skills Strategy - at a glance

The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a spotlight on the value of a digital economy and a community that is adaptable and resilient. This has been a hugely challenging year, with an exponential acceleration in the digitisation of everyday life and an accompanying risk of catastrophic consequences for those not equipped to make the switch. The City Corporation has continued to look at what the Financial and Professional Services (FPS) sector can do to ensure that it has the digitally skilled workforce it needs. We have also worked hard to support young people through raising awareness of jobs in tech and connecting our young people with employers via the London Careers Festival. This was delivered virtually at short notice due to COVID-19 and, despite Officers' best efforts, did not attract the same number of students as in previous years so many students missed out on this opportunity. Through our continued funding of digital transformational projects for the charitable sector we have sought to accelerate their work to address social issues. We have learnt that the performance of our activities must be more stringently measured and ambitious targets set. Next year, we will increase the number of actions and performance measures to widen the strategy's impact.

In 2019/20 we delivered against 30 activities to improve digital skills for people and businesses. Of these 30 actions, 8 are complete and 28 are ongoing.

Social Mobility Strategy, 2018 – 28: Potential today, success tomorrow

Executive Summary

Our definition of social mobility

The ability and opportunity for individuals, families or groups to progress within a society to reach their full potential – in terms of income, education, employment, perceived social status, housing and place/postcode.

Why us

The City of London Corporation is committed to championing social mobility throughout our work internally and with our unique combination of stakeholders spanning the private, public, charitable and community sectors across the Square Mile, the City, London, the UK and beyond. Social mobility is a key organisational priority outlined in our Corporate Plan (CP) for 2018-23, which will help to deliver our aims to contribute to a flourishing society and support a thriving economy.

Who we will work with

Our resident and worker population, businesses in the City, the charities and good causes we support through our charitable giving, our learners across our family of schools and cultural institutions, government and policy makers.

Our Vision

People enjoy a society where individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds can flourish and reach their full potential.

Our Aim

To bridge and reduce the social and economic divides that may be experienced by people during their lifetime, by maximising and promoting social mobility within businesses, organisations, central and local government and educational and cultural institutions.

Our Outcomes

Everyone can develop the skills and talent they need to thrive.

Links to CP Outcome 3

Opportunity is accessed more evenly and equally across society.

Links to CP Outcome 3

Businesses and organisations are representative and trusted.

Links to CP Outcome 8

We role model and enable social mobility in the way we operate as an organisation and employer.
Links to CP Outcome 5

Our Activities

- Prepare our learners for the jobs of the future.
- Raise educational and employment aspiration and attainment.

- Remove barriers, overcome gaps and improve access and participation in order to improve attainment.
- Support and deliver social action, social integration, networking and understand the impact of conscious and unconscious biases.

- Promote and encourage the need for and benefits of social mobility across business and government.
- Support organisations, government and policy makers to improve their own practices and leadership to facilitate social mobility.

- Identify and address barriers to employment and progression inclusively.
- Review our organisational working practices to ensure that these do not act as barriers to social mobility.
- Champion equality, diversity and inclusion.

Our Success Measures

Over the next 10 years, we will be a valued advocate and thought leader for social mobility, committing to collaboration, partnership work, innovation and longitudinal evaluation, to ensure equality of opportunity for all and the removal of structural inequalities and barriers within our own organisation and beyond.
We won't just work to level the playing field, we will make it fairer too.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Digital Skills Strategy at the City of London Corporation, 2018 – 23

Shaping tomorrow's City today

About us:

The City Corporation's reach extends far beyond the boundaries of the Square Mile and the City, across the private, public, charitable and community sectors. Our digital skills strategy supports the aims set out in our Corporate Plan for 2018-23 to contribute to a flourishing society, support a thriving economy and shape outstanding environments.

Our Vision:

People and businesses, across the City, London and beyond, are equipped to take full advantage of digital technologies and innovations to help themselves and their economies thrive.

Our Outcomes:

1. The City, London and the UK have the skills, talent and digital expertise they need to drive digital productivity and competitiveness.
2. People and businesses have the digital skills they need to thrive in all aspects of their lives.

Who will we work with:

- The residents, learners and workers we work with directly.
 - The businesses we support in the City, London and beyond and local, regional, central and global governments.
- The communities we support through our charitable giving, distributed mainly via City Bridge Trust.

Our priorities:

Digital Competitiveness

Digital Creativity

Digital Citizenship

Our activities:

Working with businesses we will explore the ways in which we can:

- Support digital innovation and enterprise.
- Fill the digital skills gaps and shortages that businesses identify.
- Prevent and safeguard against cyber-attacks and cyber terrorism.

[Links to Corporate Plan Outcomes 5, 6, 7, 8.](#)

Working with businesses, educators and civil society, we will consider how we can:

- Raise educational aspiration and attainment in terms of digital skills.
- Prepare our learners, for the jobs of the future, in terms of the necessary digital skills, behaviours, attitudes and competencies.

[Links to Corporate Plan Outcomes 3, 8, 10.](#)

Working with individuals and communities, we will consider how we can:

- Use digital skills to address barriers and gaps to improve access and participation.
- Use digital skills to connect the capital, enable positive transitions and provide advice and support.
- Improve cyber, digital and financial inclusion and safety.

[Links to Corporate Plan Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4.](#)

Implementing this strategy:

We will embed collaboration, thought leadership and innovation across all aspects of our digital skills work, in order to deliver the vision, priorities, outcomes and activities set out in this strategy, developing responses and interventions to the issues and opportunities that digital skills present society and the economy. We will promote and share our learning, championing the DQ™ digital intelligence framework as part of this. We will look outwards to identify where we want to intervene and track our impact.

Definition of digital skills:

Digital skills are the set of skills, attitudes and values which will enable people to thrive and flourish in current and future digital environments.

Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies Annual Report 2019-20

Annual action plan

In developing the strategies, we created annual action plans to ensure our visions for Social Mobility and Digital Skills are converted into concrete, attainable and measurable steps. We review progress to drive efficiency and accountability within the organisation and to share ideas, opportunities and learning. The City Corporation's actions are designed to be long-term, methodical, interventions that deliver the most impact possible.

The actions for the Social Mobility Strategy are set in the context of our daily efforts to work towards our vision of 'People enjoy a society where individuals from all socio-economic backgrounds can flourish and reach their full potential' but also our broader commitments to supporting a diverse and sustainable London within a globally-successful UK.

The actions for the Digital Skills Strategy we take are set in the context of our daily efforts to work towards our vision of 'People and businesses, across the City, London and beyond, are equipped to take advantage of digital technologies and innovations to help themselves and their economies thrive' but also our broader commitments to promoting London as a global leader with a flourishing society.



COVID-19

Social Mobility Strategy

Our activities during this period sought to safeguard and build on our existing work, reframing our priorities to serve businesses and the community in recovering from the impacts of COVID-19. We worked hard to transition activities online where possible from our London Careers Festival, adult education, and library provision. We also worked to minimise and mitigate learning loss and have also commissioned research into the horizon for education systems and the learning opportunities arising from COVID-19.

We moved to expand provision of school forum meetings and provided regular policy briefings to schools on the latest Government announcements, resources and opportunities. We participated in a number of national and global initiatives including the Department for Education's School Recovery Group and the OECD's International Forum on Recovery Curriculum Models.

Digital Skills Strategy

The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst in the role digital plays in our life and has clarified both the scale and legitimacy of digital in the modern world.

We sought to continue to recommend the funding of digital skills training initiatives and organisations through our role as a founding partner in future.now and the Financial Services Skills Commission.

We ran our second London Careers Festival virtually and our 14 schools and academies were quick to innovate and prevent disruption to learning, using specialised video conferencing to deliver lessons.

We also supported families and young people with the provision of digital devices, 23 preloaded dongles and hotspot devices.

The City Corporation will continue to focus on digital as a key component of COVID-19 recovery and welcomes the announcement of a new digital strategy from the Government this autumn. We also helped feed into the Digital Skills APPG's latest report on the impact of COVID-19 and lessons learned for improving digital skills.

Strategic Priorities/Outcomes

Social Mobility Strategy: Outcomes

Outcome 1 – Everyone can develop the skills and talent they need to thrive

- Libraries – In 2019-20 there were 442,174 visitors to the libraries. There were 68 adult reading sessions with 473 participations and 62 children reading sessions attended by 22 people. Free and inclusive access to space and materials is provided and reading programmes, classes and courses that encourage skills development and lifelong learning are delivered, including Only Connect IT training, Let's Talk English Conversation Classes, Writing workshops, CV Workshops along with 279 one-to-one IT sessions.
- Unaccompanied Asylum Seeker Classroom Project – The aim of this project was to support the development of English language and literacy skills to enable progress into further education, vocational education and employment.
- The Family of Schools Creative Response – The City of London Academy Highgate Hill (CoLAHH) have collaborated with Culture Mile Learning (CML) and the London Metropolitan Archives to develop a series of CPD webinars for English teachers to inspire creative teaching methods and schemes of work. The City of London Academy Highbury Grove (CoLAHG) have been running a photography module called 'The Hidden City' about Lockdown. At the Aldgate School (formerly Sir John Cass's Foundation Primary School), staff have used Google Classrooms to post different Art challenges each week with resources for home learning.
- CISI & Think Investments programmes – We have partnered with the Chartered Institute of Securities and Investment and The Investment Association's Investment20/20 scheme to understand whether an entry level financial services qualification, sector specific expert employability support, or a combination of both, has the greatest impact on young people accessing the sector.

Outcome 2 – Opportunity is accessed more evenly and equally across society strategy

- Culture Mile Learning – Although COVID-19 necessitated the closure of cultural venues across London, CML provided 9,355 hard copy Play Packs of creative activities and resources for primary school-aged children who were most in need.
- Business Healthy – This year, the Business Healthy network delivered masterclasses covering subjects including cancer in the workplace, COVID-19, and the health and wellbeing benefits of volunteering. This is in addition to signposting people to a range of free support services and resources, including Dragon Café in the City, Thrive LDN's "Coping Well during COVID-19" webinars, and the work of the Lord Mayor's Appeal's This Is Me campaign.
- Online Mentoring Programme – CML worked with a group of Islington-based young care leavers, to explore their career aspirations and matching them with relatable and inspirational mentors working in sectors that they aspire to. Three of the young people have already had an offer of some kind of real-world progression.



Above: The Dragon Café in the City is one of several offers from the Business Healthy Network to promote mental wellbeing.

Strategic Priorities/Outcomes

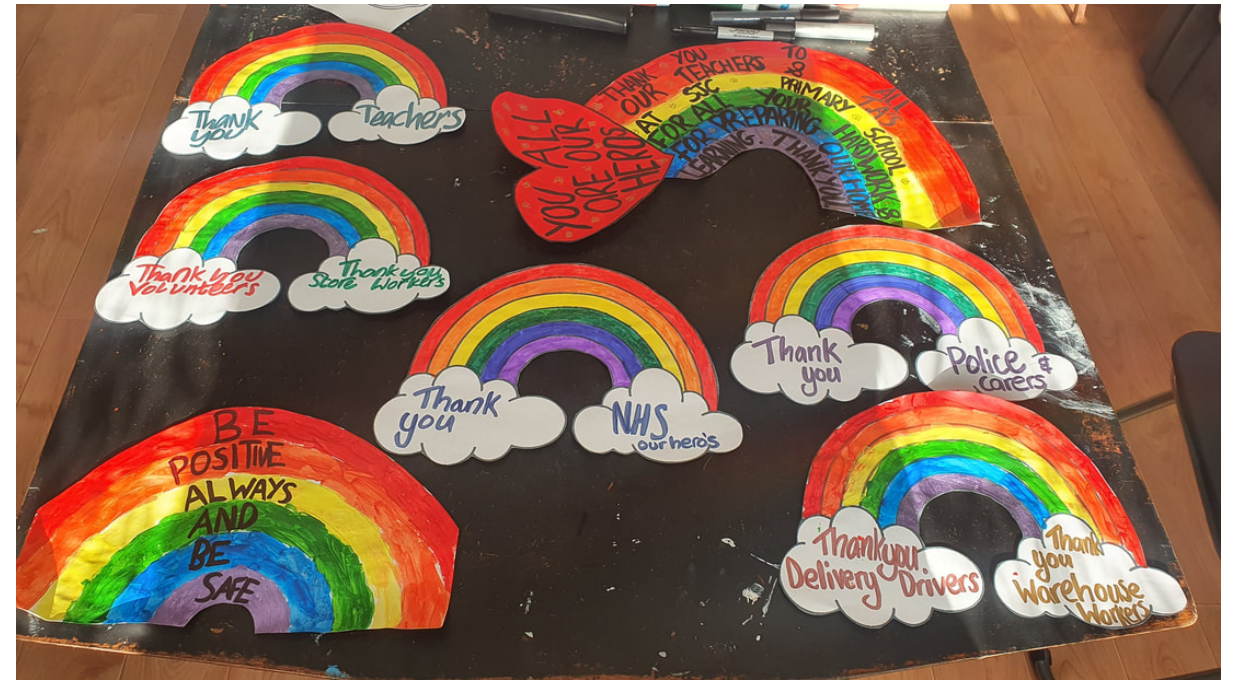
Social Mobility Strategy: Outcomes

Outcome 3 – Businesses and organisations are representative and trusted

- Financial Inclusion Summit 'Addressing in Work Poverty' – Low pay and in work poverty are major barriers to social mobility, affecting 4 million people in the UK. As a result, we delivered the first 'In Work Poverty' summit in partnership with Tomorrow's Company, which called on 200 UK employers to help the working poor.
- Bridge Group Research – The City Corporation has supported research undertaken by the Bridge Group to explore whether and how socio-economic background (SEB) affects access, performance and progression in financial services.



Above: The Bridge Group research explored whether socioeconomic background can be a barrier to careers in the financial services sector.



Above: Pupils at the Aldgate School have been using Google Classrooms to complete online Art challenges..

Outcome 4 - we role model and enable social mobility in the way we operate as an organisation and an employer

- Creation of the new Tackling Racism Taskforce – in response to the Black Lives Matter Movement, the City Corporation has created a new Tackling Racism Taskforce, consisting of elected Members and Officers. It is committed to acting quickly, radically and with determination to tackle racism.
- Staff Diversity Networks – Our six staff diversity networks continue to provide our employees with particular protected characteristics or from a lower socio-economic background a collective voice. In 2019, we joined the Stonewall Diversity Champions Programme, made a submission to the Workplace Equality Index and signed the Business in the Community (BITC) Race at Work Charter.
- Looking for potential – In 2019/20, 3.8% of our workforce were apprentices, exceeding the Government's public sector target of 2.3%. We have also developed further our careers site, video and branding approach to encourage people from more diverse backgrounds to apply for our roles.

Strategic Priorities/Outcomes

Digital Skills Strategy: Priorities

Priority 1 – Digital Competitiveness

The City Corporation has significant insight on the skills challenge facing the FPS sector through its involvement in the Financial Services Skills Commission and the Professional and Businesses Services Council. Our City Business Library also provides critical support to SMEs in digital transformation through a range of digital courses available, such as digital marketing.

- CAP Talent – This pilot programme offered 10-12 week internships paid at London living wage for students with tech start-ups to improve post-graduate employability. The project resulted in 45 internships for students from 17 universities, hosted by 39 start-ups (leading to 9 lasting hires).

"Students have told us how they are given real responsibility for projects that make a real difference to the business"

Eilidh Macdonald, Industry Employability Champion, Goldsmiths, University of London

- Sector Deal for Professional & Business Services (PBS) (Industrial Strategy) – A sector deal proposal was submitted to BEIS in July 2019, with strong City Corporation contribution to the developing talent (apprenticeships) workstream in the sector deal proposals. This agenda has progressed via collaboration with the new Financial Services Skills Commission.
- Cyber Griffin – The project is now engaged with over 350 companies, 10,000 people and run over 360 events since its foundation in 2017. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic the City of London Police created a number of new digital services, including a 'home working video series' which delivered key security advices.

"The overall exercise provided us with an independent review of our current control landscape and is a process I would recommend to other organisations"

Cyber Capability assessment for Zurich

Priority 2 – Digital Creativity

- Adult Skills and Education (ASES) – A series of short digital skills 'taster sessions' were delivered at a number of our social housing estates, in addition to plans to establish a computer teaching suite at the Avondale Community Centre. ASES have continued to provide adult learning courses to residents and workers as well as accredited apprenticeship training, moving rapidly to online teaching and learning.
- School delivery – At Newham Collegiate Sixth Form Centre there has been an exceptionally high take up with their curriculum delivered via Microsoft Teams. At Rediff Primary and Galleywall Primary schools, they deployed a rapid digital development in learning delivery, with a high take-up across the schools, including children from disadvantaged communities.

Priority 3 – Digital Citizenship

- The role of libraries – our network of libraries are a vital lifeline for digital access and training, providing free public computers and librarians trained to deliver 1-1 digital skills support. Libraries restarted our 'Only Connect' project in October 2020, delivered with Age Concern and comprising of weekly drop-in sessions focused on assisting older people with digital skills, tackling social isolation.
- Tech Takeback – The City Corporation Recycling Team, in partnership with SONECS, hosted a series of pop-up tech takeback events which engaged with 156 people and received over 900 tech items, with the intention of donating the tech to charities and the local community.
- She can be – The Lord Mayor's Appeal's She Can Be... changes the perception held by 67% of young women that men have better career opportunities (Girlguiding Girls' Attitudes Survey 2018). At this year's event, over 250 young women discovered roles in over 30 City organisations and the digital skills required to excel in them.
- Superhighways – The Datawise London programme supports charities and community groups to use data to better shape their services for the benefit of Londoners. COVID-19 has meant that it has needed to adapt the programme from face-to-face to online provision and supporting frontline organisations to adapt their service provision to online medium and make better use and access of data.

Performance & Future Delivery

Performance

Social Mobility Strategy

We are committed to measuring the effectiveness and impact of our work against key performance indicators (KPIs), aligned to our four outcome areas. We will continue to build on our performance framework and our journey to collecting baseline and benchmarking data, with an ambition for future reports to provide baseline and benchmark data for all 37 KPIs and our targets.



Digital Skills Strategy

Last year we designed a performance framework that committed us to measuring the effectiveness and impact of our work against key performance indicators (KPIs) in our Corporate Performance Framework (CPF) and also the KPIs of the Financial Services Skills Commission. The performance framework also enables us to clearly demonstrate our impact against our Corporate Plan for 2018-23.

In addition, strategy-specific indicators will be identified to demonstrate the strategy's impact. The key measure of success is that our stakeholders will have the digital skills they need in order to thrive in a digital economy and society.



Future Delivery

Social Mobility Strategy

Taking a ten-year approach to the strategy is vital to ensure that the lasting impacts of the interventions planned are fully realised through a sustainable commitment. There remains much to do in order not only to level the playing field, but to make it fairer too, ensuring that everyone can participate, compete and succeed.

Whilst many of the activities in our action plan will continue and develop, we will also spend the next year focusing on:

- Considering socio-economic background as a 10th protected characteristic and seeking to create a culture of inclusivity at the City Corporation
- Exploring the links between social mobility and health and wellbeing
- Promoting and championing the development of fusion skills across work, learning and cultural sectors so that everyone can flourish and thrive
- Embedding a corporate approach to our external communications, influencing and thought leadership activities on social mobility
- Identifying and developing new activities that we can deliver in this space
- Fully implementing the strategy's performance framework so we can learn as we go and hone the interventions that have most impact.

Future Delivery, Oversight & Responsibility

Future Delivery continued

Digital Skills Strategy

Digital skills and inclusion is a major policy objective of local and central government and we are therefore pleased to demonstrate our continued commitment to our strategy, in pursuit of our vision where people and businesses across the City, London and beyond are equipped to take full advantage of digital technologies and innovations, to help themselves and their economies thrive.

The next stage of our work will continue to address the digital skills gap for both the economy and community but also with a focus on our roadmap of post-COVID recovery. There also remains much work needed to address financial and health inequalities, social isolation, and digital inclusion, such as addressing digital devices, data and know-how poverty.

Whilst many of the activities in our action plan will continue and progress, we will also spend year 3 focusing on:

- In partnership with KPMG, running a legal tech innovation pilot in November 2020
- Collaborating with the FCA on the pilot of a 'digital sandbox' to support innovative firms tackling challenges caused by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic
- Seeking to widen access to devices and connectivity, working with partners such as the Good Things Foundation and Tomorrow's Company
- Taking part in 'Get Online Week' on 19-25 October 2020
- Developing meaningful digital and tech work experience placements.



Oversight and responsibility

Social Mobility Strategy

David Farnsworth, the Director of City Bridge Trust and the City Corporation's Chief Grants Officer, is the senior responsible officer for this strategy.

Digital Skills Strategy

Andrew Carter, Director of the Department for Community and Children's Services, and Damian Nussbaum, Director of Innovation and Growth, are the chairs for this strategy.

Social Cross-Corporation Working Group

David Farnsworth, Andrew Carter and Damian Nussbaum are supported in the delivery of both strategies by the Social Cross-Corporation Working Group (SCCWG), which meets on a six-weekly basis and also incorporates delivery of [the Responsible Business Strategy](#).

The SCCWG was established to replace the previous separate Implementation Groups for the Social Mobility and Digital Skills Strategies, in response to the COVID-19 epidemic and also with a view to producing a single annual report for our corporate strategies.

The SCCWG is co-chaired by Divindy Grant and Chris Oldham and is made up of officers from the following teams:

- Corporate Strategy and Performance
- Corporate Philanthropy and Volunteering
- City Bridge Trust
- Community and Children's Services
- Strategic Education, Skills and Culture Unit
- Innovation and Growth
- Human Resources
- Town Clerk and Chief Executive's Office.
- The Lord Mayor's Appeal
- Culture Mile Learning
- The City of London Police