

Core Script for Speaking Opportunities

CONTEXT

The Women Pivoting to Digital Taskforce brings employers, government, and third sector organisations together to tackle digital talent shortages in the UK by promoting mid-career female career changers as an untapped talent solution.

The aim of the Taskforce is to help businesses fill talent gaps while also addressing the underrepresentation of women working in digital careers by providing them with vital skills to future proof the digital workforce. Hiring mid-career women from non-technical backgrounds not only addresses skills gaps but also promotes equity in the digital workforce.

Alongside industry partners (Accenture and Oliver Wyman), CoLC will plan several opportunities to raise the profile of the Taskforce. In addition, Taskforce and Strategy Steering Board members may have separate speaking engagements where the Taskforce could be highlighted.

This document has been created to ensure all speakers are equipped with key messages and there is a consistent message amongst the various speakers.

KEY MESSAGES

1. Digital talent shortages are having a significant impact across the UK economy, with gaps in AI, data, cyber, and software development limiting productivity and weakening competitiveness. According to [Untapped Digital Talent: The £3bn Opportunity](#):
 - a. If the digital talent gap persists across these sectors, the UK economy could lose £10.8 billion in productivity and £3.3 billion in profits over the next decade.
 - b. The UK faces a digital skill shortage, with 12,100 digital roles in financial and professional services and technology going unfilled in 2024. This cost the UK nearly £1 billion in Gross Value Added (GVA) and £296 million in profits.
 - c. By 2035, AI and automation could displace almost 120,000 women's jobs in these sectors; driving insecurity and generating up to £757m in severance costs for firms without reskilling pathways.
 - d. Internal reskilling programmes can save £49K per employee vs 'firing and rehiring', and skills-based hiring cuts recruitment costs by around 30%.
 - e. Lloyds Banking Group and Aviva are rapidly expanding their digital workforces by investing in alternative hiring routes. Taskforce partners also report that they regularly convert 80% to 90% of participants from training courses into permanent roles.
2. ['Untapped Digital Talent: The £3bn Opportunity'](#) has a key ask for businesses to reskill existing employees into digital roles, especially those at risk of redundancy due to automation, and open up their hiring pathways to include women from non-technical backgrounds who do not have direct, recent technical experience but have the skills and

training to thrive in digital roles. Below are recommendations on how businesses can do this:

- a. **Audit roles at risk of automation** to understand where displacement is likely and where reskilling could offer a practical alternative to redundancy. This helps firms plan ahead and identify potential pathways into digital careers.
 - b. **Start with a small pilot**, focused on a limited number of digital roles where demand is high and skills are most transferable. This helps demonstrate value and reduces risk.
 - c. **Secure early sponsorship from senior leaders**, hiring managers and HR teams so that training time, role availability, and internal processes are aligned.
 - d. **Use selection processes that assess aptitude and motivation**, rather than relying on recent technical experience or degree requirements.
 - e. **Work with training providers, local councils, and Job Centres** to hire talent who have undergone a bootcamp or short courses.
 - f. **Design training to be flexible and accessible**, often using virtual and part-time formats that fit around existing roles and responsibilities.
 - g. **Combine technical training with support for transferable skills**, including confidence, communication and problem solving, which employers found critical to long-term performance.
 - h. **Provide coaching and structured support** from application through placement and into the first months in role, helping to address the experience gap and build confidence on both sides.
 - i. **Track conversion and retention outcomes** and share early success stories internally to build support among managers and staff.
3. For years, organisations have been working on addressing the lack of equity in technology and digital and have produced significant evidence on skills shortages and a lack of female representation.
- a. A [report](#) by Alan Turing Institute shows that women make up fewer than 25% of those working in specialised digital roles like artificial intelligence and data science. Additionally, those who are in these roles are in lower wage or less technical jobs.
 - b. A Tech Talent Charter and Code First Girls [report](#) found that in the UK, there will be one qualified woman for every 115 tech or digital roles. Additionally, only 2% of women have had the opportunity to upskill at work.
 - c. According to training provider Makers, if only 26% of the digital workforce is women and only 17% of computer science grads are women it will take 50 years to achieve 50-50 gender parity in these roles.
 - d. There is also evidence that shows that women that are part of the digital workforce are more likely to experience discrimination and often think of leaving these careers often, according to a [Fawcett Society survey](#) of women working in tech. 43% of women think about leaving once a week and 72% experienced sexism at work.
 - e. Digital skills shortages are pervasive across all sectors of the economy; however, women are still overlooked for these opportunities. Skills vacancies cost £6.3bn each year in lost revenue for the UK, [according to techUK](#).
 - f. Women will also need more technology skills to adapt to new ways of working due to AI and automation, [according to Mckinsey](#).

4. This Taskforce was developed to bring employers, government, and third sector together to collaborate on solutions to address these gaps, especially at a time when AI and digital skills have gained significant traction.
5. The Taskforce has focused on mid-career level women from non-technical backgrounds specifically because this is where City of London could add the most value as there are already fantastic programmes that exist to help girls go into STEM, entry level talent, and senior to executive level.
6. Additionally, women at this level have a variety of transferrable skills and experience that are incredibly valuable to apply to new roles.

WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Upskilling/ reskilling women in digital at mid-career digital provides an opportunity to...

Fill essential digital and tech talent gaps

- Artificial intelligence and digital technologies have the potential to disrupt the financial and professional services (FPS) as well the technology sector and transform the future of work.¹ It is imperative that the FPS sector adopts and integrates new technology to remain competitive in the global landscape, but in order to do so, it will need workers to be upskilled and reskilled in emerging technology.
 - FPS employers are experiencing high levels of specialist digital roles vacancies, making it more difficult to nurture innovation and become a world class business environment. Without skilled digital workers, it will be a major challenge to integrate technology across UK FPS and support FPS-tech to scale.
 - A survey conducted by Gallup and Amazon Web Services, found that 72 per cent of businesses in the UK have vacancies for workers with digital skills and more than two thirds (68 per cent) find it challenging to hire the digital workers they need – which 45 per cent attribute to a shortage of qualified applicants.²
 - Vacancies in tech has already cost the UK economy £6.3bn in lost GDP each year and is predicted to worsen significantly.
- Tech and FPS employers are experiencing significant vacancies in digital roles, which could potentially be filled by hiring more women at the mid-career level.
 - Employers place considerable value on transferable skills. Three-quarters of survey respondents said they prioritised transferable skills equal to or above technical skills when recruiting new employees.³
 - Transferable skills that are of high priority for employers include oral communication / presentation skills, teamwork / collaboration, initiative and problem-solving. Over 90% of respondents said these were a 'high' or 'very high' priority when recruiting new hires.⁴
 - Employers often struggle to accurately assess transferable skills using traditional recruitment processes and report that candidates' self-assessments of their skills are often unreliable.⁵

¹ [Why AI will redefine the financial services industry in two years | EY - Global](#)

² [Digital skills drive gains for individuals, organisations and the UK economy](#)

³ [Transferable skills in the workplace | Nesta](#)

⁴ [Transferable skills in the workplace | Nesta](#)

⁵ [Transferable skills in the workplace | Nesta](#)

- Through attracting and reskilling women to meet the needs of this growing job market, there is an opportunity to support greater UK growth and innovation, providing a tangible offer for regional partners and employers.
 - 20.8% of individuals could be positively reskilled into roles of growing demand. This is equivalent to almost 230,000 financial services staff who without reskilling would otherwise be made redundant.
 - Employers can save up to £49,000 by reskilling employees.⁶

Boost productivity by upskilling and reskilling the workforce

- Artificial intelligence and digital technologies have the potential to disrupt the financial and professional services (FPS) as well the technology sector and transform the future of work.⁷ It will be imperative that the FPS sector adopts and integrates new technology to remain competitive in the global landscape, but in order to do so, it will need workers to be upskilled and reskilled in emerging technology. At the same time, there is a widening gender gap in specialist digital roles.
- The demand for AI skills is rapidly increasing: retail banking is experiencing a +236% demand and legal 345% increase. In a report by City of London and KPMG, AI will boost productivity by 50% by 2030 and boost revenue by £35bn but FPS firms need to invest in training and have the right strategies in place to capitalise.⁸

Maximise global competitiveness

- In order for a digital transformation to happen at the scale needed, we must have the skilled workforce necessary to lead the charge on new technological advancements. The report states that UK organisations need to be able to easily recruit, retain, and retrain top talent. 'Digital skills' were noted as a high priority for FPS firms with 'reskilling' seen as critical to fill skills shortages.⁹

Meet the sector's diversity and inclusion objectives

- Women are significantly underrepresented in almost all digital roles.
 - Women make up around 50% of the UK workforce. Yet in tech, that number is half, with just 24% of roles filled by women.¹⁰
- Social mobility is also a major issue in these roles with the proportion of employees from working class backgrounds measuring only 19%, compared to 33.3% across other industries.¹¹
 - The data is even starker for underrepresented groups and minorities, for example, .7% of all roles being occupied by a black woman.¹²
 - While we do have some data of all roles, the data is less clear for all financial and professional services firms.

⁶ [Reskilling-A-business-case-FINAL-Jan-2022.pdf \(financialservicesskills.org\)](#)

⁷ [Disruptive Digital Technologies in the Financial Services Industry | Deloitte US](#)

⁸ [The Future of AI and the FPS Workforce](#)

⁹ [Vision for Economic Growth — a roadmap to prosperity \(theglobalcity.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ [Women in Tech \(techuk.org\)](#)

¹¹ [Social mobility and gender parity in tech | NatWest Group](#)

¹² [Black women missing from tech industry, says report - BBC News](#)

- As technology continues to be a key strategic priority for the FPS sector, it is crucial that equity inclusion underpins all activities to ensure that people are not left behind. According to Blackrock, the firms with the highest rates of diversity also experience greater returns.¹³
- A report by McKinsey found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are, on average, 15% more likely to have above average financial returns. The findings also highlighted that companies with female leadership teams outperformed less gender-diverse companies by a staggering 48%.¹⁴

TASKFORCE GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

1. High-level Taskforce goals:

- Demonstrate that women from non-tech backgrounds are a key talent solution to fill role vacancies, creating the conditions for innovation and growth.
- Provide equal opportunities for women into the digital workforce, no matter their background, by providing them with the tools to career change.
- Break down barriers for women with government-backed policies that promote equity, safety, and growth within digital and AI roles.
- Amplify and elevate the outputs and messages of the Taskforce to promote women's equality at the heart of our mission.

2. Taskforce Governance:

- The Taskforce is led by two Chairs and a Strategy Steering Group:
 - i. Caroline Haines, (Chair of the Women Pivoting to Digital Taskforce; Vice Chair, Policy and Resources at City of London Corporation)
 - ii. Sheridan Ash (Co-Chair of the Taskforce; CEO of Tech She Can)
 - iii. +25 senior level leaders working to increase diversity in the digital workforce
- The Taskforce will run from May 2024- 2026.
- Workstream 1: Accenture is our delivery partner. Vasiliki Mermigka is the lead.
 - i. Stakeholder: financial and professional services or tech firm employers
- Workstream 2: Oliver Wyman is our delivery partner. Deborah O'Neill is the lead.
 - i. Stakeholder: third sector organisations or local councils
- Workstream 3: Dr Erin Young is the lead.
 - i. Stakeholder: Academics and policy experts
- Insights Group
 - i. x60 key organisations from across the three workstreams
- An Associate Membership supports the work of the Taskforce, comprised of anyone who is interested in closely following the work of the Taskforce.

3. Definitions and sectors: Key terms are defined below:

- **Mid-career:** 5+ years' experience
- **Digital Role:** Meets a [DCMS definition](#) where a role is considered digital if 10% of the job description requires specific skills in software and programming; computer and networking support; data analysis; digital design; CRM; digital marketing;

¹³ [Workforce diversity boosts performance \(blackrock.com\)](#)

¹⁴ [McKinsey Reports: Diversity Matters-Vivian Hunt, Dennis Layton & Sara Prince](#)

machining and manufacturing technology. We'll also include adjacent roles that cover digital topics like AI ethics, or tech regulation.

- **Non-technical background:** not having a degree or background in computer science, digital technology, or any digital role.
- The Taskforce is **UK wide** and across **financial and professional services as well tech sectors**.

4. Workstream Activities and Details

There are three Taskforce workstreams with their own aims and activities.

Workstream 1, Employers: Equipping businesses with the tools to better attract and retain women from non-technical backgrounds into digital careers. The objective of the following Workstream 1 outputs is to build the business case for action and support businesses to upskill and hire female career changers.

- Type of organisations involved in Workstream 1: this workstream is comprised of organisation from the financial and professional services and tech employers.
- Outputs:
 1. **Business case:** The Taskforce launched its flagship report '[Untapped Digital Talent: The £3bn Opportunity](#)' on 3rd February 2026. The report draws on employer insights and industry-wide evidence to spotlight the cost of digital talent gaps and how these talent shortages in AI, data, cyber and software development are constraining productivity and weakening UK competitiveness.
 2. **Employer Pilot Programme:** Launch pilot programme with Taskforce organisations that facilitate upskilling women internally.
- Encourage businesses to reskill female employees into digital roles, particularly those at risk of redundancy, and to hire women into digital roles from non-technical backgrounds.
- Help employers understand the business case for upskilling/ reskilling and hiring from non-traditional routes as well as understand their future digital skills needs.
- Highlight cultural changes businesses need to make to recruit and retain women.

Workstream 2, Providers: Providing practical tools to third sector organisations and local government to better attract/retrain women from non-technical backgrounds into digital careers. This will include building an understand of what is preventing women from career changing into tech and help de-mystify what it means to work in a digital role.

- Type of organisations involved in Workstream 2: this workstream is comprised of training providers, nonprofits, women's networks, and local government.
- Outputs:
 1. **Turn to Tech Campaign:** A [storytelling campaign](#) that showcases women working in digital careers and how they pivoted to new roles. Within those series, provide women with practical advice on navigating their pivoting journey. We have a [podcast series](#) with senior leaders, created in partnership with Harrington Starr and our [Turn To Tech newsletter](#), sharing women's stories and male allies who have supported women.
 2. **Pivoter Programme:** Facilitate a free 6-week pivoter programme for women who are interested in learning more about roles in digital, benefits of career switching, and how to build confidence. Launching in Spring 2026.

3. **Regional Coordination:** Promote greater coordination between regions and employers by hosting roundtable events for local government and local employers. We have held regional roundtables and panel discussions in Manchester, Belfast, Leeds, London, and Edinburgh. With more planned for Birmingham, Bristol and Wales.
 - Provide practical tools to third sector organisations (training providers, non-profits, women's groups), employers, and local boroughs to attract and reskill women from non-technical backgrounds.
 - Build women's confidence, map out career pathways, understand the barriers different groups face, and showcase role models and opportunities.
 - Connect programs and project across the UK and ensure that underrepresented groups are a key part of this work.

Workstream 3, Influencing policy: Capitalise on the momentum around AI and digital skills by working with Government, regulators and academic experts to advocate for funding and using existing/develop new policy levers to greater support female career changers.

- Type of organisations involved in Workstream 3: this workstream includes academics and policy experts.
- Outputs:
 - **Policy Recommendations:** A Taskforce Manifesto with key policy recommendations for government and champion the recommendations with government. This will be released at Parliament in Spring 2026.
 - **Political Engagement:** Develop links with government departments and functions, including MPs, Labour Women in Tech / Labour Digital, as well DSIT/DfE.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

RECENT LABOUR SKILLS ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Skills England

- Labour plans to set up a new body, Skills England.
 - Skills England will aim to bring together central and local government, businesses, training providers and unions to address skills needs.
 - All the current functions from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) will be transferred to Skills England.
 - Skills England will be charged with deciding which types of training should be eligible for funding, replacing part of the work that the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) currently does.

Revamping the Apprenticeship Levy

- Labour wants to change the Apprenticeship Levy by letting eligible firms use up to 50% of the cash to fund other types of training, arguing it will help boost skills among a broader range of people and help the UK economy respond to changing technologies.
- Labour has plans to restructure how apprenticeships are to boost apprenticeship starts.

Next Steps for Labour's Skills Initiatives¹⁹:

- The first phase of Skills England's launch involves setting up the organisation in shadow form within the DfE, and starting work on an assessment of future skills needs while building strong relationships with employers. A permanent board, Chair and CEO will be appointed in due course.
- Transfer all of IfATE's functions to Skills England. IfATE will continue its important work in the interim as the transition of functions to Skills England is finalised.
- Skills England will hold responsibility for maintaining a list of levy-eligible training to ensure value for money, and that the mix of government-funded training available to learners and employers aligns with the identified skills needs.
- Labour will also bring forward a comprehensive strategy for post-16 education to break down barriers to opportunity, support the development of a skilled workforce, and drive economic growth through their industrial strategy.

LABOUR MANIFESTO SKILLS COMMITMENTS

Workforce skills

- They will establish Skills England to bring together business, training providers and unions with national and local government to ensure we have the highly trained workforce needed to deliver Labour's Industrial Strategy.
 - Skills England will co-ordinate between local areas to ensure everyone can access all the opportunities available
- Labour will also reform the Apprenticeships Levy. Labour will create a flexible Growth and Skills Levy, with Skills England consulting on eligible courses to ensure qualifications offer value for money.
- Local areas will be able to gain new powers over transport, adult education and skills, housing and planning, and employment support.
 - They will devolve funding so local areas can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer for local people.
- Local leaders will work with major employers, universities, colleges, and industry bodies to produce long-term plans that identify growth sectors and put in place the programmes and infrastructure they need to thrive. These will align with our national industrial strategy.

Artificial Intelligence

- Create a National Data Library to bring together existing research programmes and help deliver data-driven public services, whilst maintaining strong safeguards and ensuring all of the public benefit.

Childhood education

- They will also guarantee two weeks' worth of work experience for every young person, and improve careers advice in schools and colleges.
- Labour will introduce new Regional Improvement Teams, to enhance school-to-school support, and spread best practice.
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 - Labour will launch an expert-led review of curriculum and assessment.

University and Colleges

- Labour will bring joined-up thinking, ensuring that migration to address skills shortages triggers a plan to upskill workers and improve working conditions in the UK.
- Labour will establish a youth guarantee of access to training, an apprenticeship, or support to find work for all 18- to 21-year-olds.
- Labour will transform Further Education colleges into specialist Technical Excellence Colleges. These colleges will work with businesses, trade unions, and local government to

provide young people with better job opportunities and the highly trained workforce that local economies need.

Diversity

- Women's equality will be at the heart of our missions. They will strengthen rights to equal pay and protections from maternity and menopause discrimination and sexual harassment.
- Labour will introduce a landmark Race Equality Act, to enshrine in law the full right to equal pay for Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority people, strengthen protections against dual discrimination and root out other racial inequalities.
- We will introduce the full right to equal pay for disabled people. Building 88 Change Labour Party Manifesto 2024 on gender pay gap reporting, we will introduce disability and ethnicity pay gap reporting for large employers.

KING'S SPEECH COMMITMENTS: SKILLS

Skills England Bill [Department for Education]

The Bill will transfer functions from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to Skills England. Skills England will convene employers, unions, education and training providers, and experts with national government to develop a single picture of national and local skills needs, identify the training for which the Growth and Skills Levy will be accessible and ensure that the national and regional skills systems needs are aligned.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- [Tech Talent Charter: Diversity in Tech Report](#)
- PwC [Women in tech: Time to close the gender gap - PwC UK](#)
- McKinsey: [The future of women at work: Transitions in the age of automation | McKinsey](#)
- Fawcett Society: [System Update: Addressing the Gender Gap in Tech \(fawcettsociety.org.uk\)](#)
- [FSSC report](#) on how upskilling employees that would otherwise be made redundant saves over £49,000 per employee.