

The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Digital Skills - Call for evidence on the impact of Covid-19 and lessons learned for improving digital skills in the future

Submission by the Barclays Digital Eagles

Introduction

The Barclays Digital Eagles empower colleagues, customers and local communities to be more confident with technology and to move forward in the digital world. They provide support with coding training for children, Tea and Teach sessions for adults and through the online learning platform, Digital Wings.

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, the Digital Eagles have been providing free online educational videos on a range of topics, ideal for those starting out on their digital journey and have increased the frequency of their coding sessions to every weekday. Back in June, the Digital Eagles also pledged to deliver digital skills training to 500 care homes nationwide by the end of the year.

What support do the Barclays Digital Eagles offer all year round?

- **Tea and Teach** – in-branch sessions delivering practical support and advice. These sessions now feature as educational videos on the Barclays UK YouTube channel.
- **Digital Wings** - a free online learning platform with modules on everything from using the internet to staying safe online.
- **Code Playground** - sessions for children to help them get to grips with the basics of coding with resources aligned to the National Curriculum for Key Stage 2.

Our impact

- Since 2013, the Digital Eagles have trained over **14,000** current and former Barclays colleagues;
- Last year, **113,000** people were helped during our Tea and Teach events and **37,000** children through our Code Playground sessions;¹
- Since March, our latest online videos and coding sessions have had **110,000** views.

Question 1: Issues identified during Covid-19

Covid-19 fraud and scams

Fraudsters are taking advantage of the Covid-19 outbreak by playing on people's sense of uncertainty and fear around the pandemic. They are identifying new techniques in which to target victims online. These scams and malware campaigns are designed to mislead victims

¹ Barclays Digital Eagles: keeping older people connected through coronavirus, Barclays, 07 April 2020 - <https://home.barclays/news/2020/04/barclays-digital-eagles--keeping-older-people-connected-through-/>

into disclosing personal or financial information, downloading malware or purchasing goods or services which don't exist.² Barclays has published advice on how to identify Covid-19 related fraud and scams which can be found at barclays.co.uk/coronavirus/scams/.

Staying in touch with family and friends securely

Many more of us have been relying on technology like never before, especially for staying in touch with family, friends and colleagues. To date, our educational video on how to use social media has been the most popular with over 7,500 views. We also acknowledged that there was likely to be an increase in video calls and therefore aired a television advert providing helpful tips for making a successful call.

Question 2: How has your organisation adapted to the issues raised in Q1 and with remote working/learning?

Free online support for adults and children

We have been providing free online educational videos on a range of topics, including how to stay connected with family and friends via video calls, email or social media, how to shop online for the first time and set up accounts, alternative ways to bank online and ways to stay safe from fraud and scams. To support with home schooling, we are also hosting a Code Playground session every weekday for children to get to grips with the basics of coding with resources aligned to the National Curriculum for Key Stage 2. We have also been posting tips and advice across several social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Launched the #DigiFamilies campaign

We have launched a new campaign, #DigiFamilies, highlighting how grandchildren can play a vital role in supporting grandparents in building their digital knowledge by sharing tips and advice. It means elderly relatives can get to grips with technology in an engaging way, whilst spending quality time with family members.

Digital skills training for care homes

We have pledged to deliver digital skills training to 500 care homes nationwide by the end of the year.

Support for colleagues

We have been providing a Rapid Response service to help colleagues resolve customer's questions relating to technology – e.g. being locked out of their banking app or receiving error

² Coronavirus Scams, Barclays - barclays.co.uk/coronavirus/scams/

codes when trying to manage their money. Thus far, this team has helped over 35,000 colleagues and customers.

Question 3: What recommendations do you have for policy makers to support digital skills in the future?

- **Increase awareness of fraud, scams and money mules.** Fraud awareness campaigns must continue and, more importantly, must adapt to reflect the changes in fraud and scam techniques. Additionally, education on money mules (see annex), especially for young people, and the consequences involved should also increase. Barclays ran a successful Digital Safety campaign back in 2017 and the Barclays Digital Eagles have recently piloted money mule lessons.
- **Improve the accessibility of digital training resources.** We believe more digital training resources need to provide a basic introduction to digital skills, before moving onto the technical training. Failing to do so, could deter potential learners from participating in digital training. Additionally, more resources should be free to access entirely as some introduce a fee over time, for example, after an introductory period. However, the cost implication could be a potential barrier for some learners.
- **Dedicate a proportion of the National Skills Fund for digital skills.** It is likely that all workers will need a basic level of digital skill and knowledge for many more careers in the years to come.³ We believe that individuals will also need to be equipped with the ability to not only consume digital but also create digital. Therefore, we propose that a percentage of the National Skills Fund is dedicated to digital upskilling.
- **Establish a new Skills and Employability Working Group.** The business community is well placed to discuss best practice, share research and identify common themes that can help enhance the skills landscape. A new cross-departmental working group on skills and employability should be created, including representatives from DCMS (covering the importance of digital skills in the future world of work), DfE, DWP, BEIS and the OVA as well as business leads from a range of sectors.

Conclusion

- Fraudsters are taking advantage of the Covid-19 outbreak and identifying new techniques in which to target victims online.⁴
- In response to Covid-19, we have been producing free online educational videos, hosting coding sessions every weekday for children and have set up a rapid response service to support colleagues dealing with customer queries.

³ 'How Employable is the UK? Meeting the Future Skills Challenge', Barclays and NatCen, page 6 (referencing Stormer, 2014) https://home.barclays/content/dam/home-barclays/documents/news/2018/Barclays%20Lifeskills%20report_v10.pdf

⁴ Coronavirus Scams, Barclays - [barclays.co.uk/coronavirus/scams/](https://www.barclays.co.uk/coronavirus/scams/)

- We have pledged to provide digital skills training to 500 care homes nationwide by the end of the year.
- We advocate that education on fraud and scams, including on money mules, is bolstered; digital training resources to become more accessible; a proportion of the National Skills Fund goes towards digital upskilling; and a new Skills and Employability Working Group is established.

Where to find us

You can find us at barclays.co.uk/digital-confidence/eagles/ or via @DigitalEagles on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

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Annex

What is a money mule?

A money mule temporarily receives funds into their bank account from a third party for a 'reward' fee. They can then be asked to either withdraw the money so to give it to somebody else or transfer it on. However, being a money mule means you have participated in financial crime. There are a number of potential consequences if a money mule is caught, such as the closure of their bank account or receiving a criminal record.⁵ You can find out more by visiting barclays.co.uk/digisafe/financial-fraud/#08.

⁵ Protect your money – Learn to better protect yourself, Barclays - barclays.co.uk/digisafe/financial-fraud/#08