



HM Government

# Digital Charter

**We want to make the UK both the safest place to be online and the best place to start and grow a digital business. We are determined that the UK should lead the world in innovation-friendly regulation that encourages the tech sector and provides stability for businesses. Through this we can increase public confidence and trust in new technologies, and create the best possible basis on which the digital economy can thrive.**

The internet is a powerful force for good. It serves humanity, spreads ideas and enhances freedom and opportunity across the world. Combined with new technologies such as artificial intelligence, it is set to change society perhaps more than any previous technological revolution – growing the economy, making us more productive, and raising living standards.

Alongside these new opportunities come new challenges and risks. The internet can be used to spread terrorist material; it can be a tool for abuse and bullying; and it can be used to undermine civil discourse, objective news and intellectual property. Citizens rightly want to know that they will be safe and secure online. Tackling these challenges in an effective and responsible way is critical for digital technology to thrive.

The Digital Charter is our response: a rolling programme of work to agree norms and rules for the online world and put them into practice. In some cases this will be through shifting expectations of behaviour; in some we will need to agree new standards; and in others we may need to update our laws and regulations. Our starting point will be that we will have the same rights and expect the same behaviour online as we do offline.

The Charter's core purpose is to make the internet work for everyone – for citizens, businesses and society as a whole. It is based on liberal values that cherish freedom, but not the freedom to harm others. These are challenges with which every nation is grappling. The internet is a global network and we will work with other countries that share both our values and our determination to get this right.

We will be guided by these principles:

- the internet should be free, open and accessible
- people should understand the rules that apply to them when they are online
- personal data should be respected and used appropriately
- protections should be in place to help keep people safe online, especially children
- the same rights that people have offline must be protected online
- the social and economic benefits brought by new technologies should be fairly shared

## Work programme

The Charter brings together a broad, ongoing programme, which will evolve as technology changes. Our current priorities include:

- **Digital economy** – building a thriving ecosystem where technology companies can start and grow.
- **Online harms** – protecting people from harmful content and behaviour, including building understanding and resilience, and working with industry to encourage the development of technological solutions.
- **Liability** – looking at the legal liability that online platforms have for the content shared on their sites, including considering how we could get more effective action through better use of the existing legal frameworks and definitions.
- **Data and artificial intelligence (AI) ethics and innovation** – ensuring data is used in safe and ethical way, and when decisions are made based on data, these are fair and appropriately transparent.
- **Digital markets** – ensuring digital markets are working well, including through supporting data portability and the better use, control and sharing of data.
- **Disinformation** – limiting the spread and impact of disinformation intended to mislead for political, personal and/or financial gain.
- **Cyber security** – supporting businesses and other organisations to take the steps necessary to keep themselves and individuals safe from malicious cyber activity, including by reducing the burden of responsibility on end-users

There has already been good progress under the Charter's work programme, including to:

- give people more control over their personal data through the [Data Protection Bill](#)
- protect children and vulnerable adults online through the [Internet Safety Strategy](#)
- create a new Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation to advise government and regulators on the implications of new data-driven technologies, including AI
- build international pressure and consensus to tackle terrorist use of the internet and support the establishment of an international industry-led forum to look at it

## Approach

The Charter will not be developed by government alone. We will look to the tech sector, businesses and civil society to own these challenges with us, using our convening power to bring them together with other interested parties to find solutions.

As we work on the Charter, we are committing to:

- make it as easy as possible for citizens and others to give us their views
- harness the ingenuity of the tech sector, looking to them for answers to specific technological challenges, rather than government dictating precise solutions
- consider the full range of possible solutions, including legal changes where necessary, to establish standards and norms online
- lead by example, including through our procurement policy and the unique data we hold
- build an international coalition of like-minded countries to develop a joint approach

Technology is always evolving and so will the Charter, adapting to respond to new challenges and opportunities. This is a living document, which we will update as we make progress on our work programme.