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Dear Colleagues,

**Paper 4/2018: The Challenge and Opportunities of the Digital Age**

We hope that you had a good summer and that you have seen the encouraging formal responses that we received to our discussions on the environment, on skills & training and on Conservatives values. We are now processing your submissions to our health & social care paper and are pleased to publish this new discussion paper on the challenge and opportunities of the digital age.

As always, discussions will be more greatly informed if groups are able to include members from different age groups. If your CPF Group does not usually include many **members aged under 40**, then we would encourage you to use this opportunity to reach out to younger voters in your constituency.

Please advertise the CPF paper on your **Facebook** and **Twitter** pages and encourage participation of non-members as well. It would be great if you could post a photo online of your meeting too. Let people know that you are interested in *them* and want to understand *their* perspective.

We want to ensure that as many associations and as many members are able to engage in this vital and wide-ranging discussion. Some groups may wish to discuss the questions over the course of two meetings. The closing date for this brief is therefore **31 October**.

Please send your responses to the paper, via [CPF.Papers@conservatives.com](mailto:CPF.Papers@conservatives.com), using the associated response form published alongside this paper in the News section of the CPF website.

A summary of responses to this paper will be sent to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, the Rt Hon Jeremy Wright MP; CPF Chairman, George Freeman MP; Conservative Vice-Chairman for Policy, Chris Skidmore MP; and the Prime Minister's Policy Unit within a month of the closing date for submissions.

The next paper will be on **Disability and Inclusion** and will be published at the start of November. Thank you. We look forward to hearing your ideas on this important topic.

**The CPF Team**

[www.conservativepolicyforum.com](http://www.conservativepolicyforum.com)

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## **The Challenge and Opportunities of the Digital Age**

*"In 1982 ... I said that "a single career change may not be enough in an age of fundamental structural evolution". ... Today we can see the spread of **annually updated** professional and technician "certificates to practice" from medical consultants [and] aerospace engineers to other areas where proof of current competence is essential. Meanwhile digital marketing or security practitioners can become seriously out of date **within months** unless they spend time **each week** keeping up to date."* (Philip Virgo, Chairman of the Conservative Technology Forum, 31 May 2018)<sup>1</sup>

The transforming power of technology is once again, changing our world. Seizing this new technology can be the basis of our nation's success after Brexit, for the rest of the 21st century. For cutting edge technology, coupled with creative and artistic genius, is the fulcrum upon which our country will be built.

Faster than ever before, the world we live in is being changed. How we earn our way around the world and how we build jobs and prosperity here at home. And we now have the chance to build on what we have done over the past decade and truly capitalise on this opportunity.

Investment in the tech sector doubled in the last year, and is growing at three times the pace of the rest of the economy. We have created more jobs than ever before and employment rates are at record highs. But there are understandable concerns that these technologies will undermine jobs and prosperity.

Yet, the risk is not that we adopt new technologies that will change jobs. The risk is that we don't adopt new technologies and that we fail to create the jobs of the future.

That means that we have this difficult balance between the need to support the disrupters who are creating new technologies, creating the new jobs and ultimately generating productivity growth; and at the same time supporting those who are disrupted. For, it's no good having a job in the long term if you don't have one in the short term.

So we need to make sure that we support those who are disrupted as well as supporting the disruption itself. We want to see redeployment not unemployment, by creating the jobs of the future and making sure people have the skills and capabilities to excel to accept them and generate them.<sup>2</sup>

As we noted in an earlier policy discussion, on jobs and skills, automation has historically increased productivity, which in turn has led to a net increase in employment and higher salaries. Nevertheless, increased investment in lifelong vocational education and training will be required to help people adapt to increased automation.

One group noted in their response to that paper, "A much more serious problem is the challenge posed by artificial intelligence to the status of academic values and knowledge-based professions."

Britain is already an authority in AI. We have the world's best AI company, Deepmind, and we are recognised by the OECD for leading in the use of AI in Government. But we need to keep looking forward. And we can only say that we've truly succeeded if we use this exciting technology to tackle the long-term issues that are shaping our world today.<sup>3</sup>

### Questions for discussion

1. To what extent do you view the digital age as a force for good?
2. Finding the balance between encouraging tech innovation and mitigating tech's harms is crucial to the tech revolution. What are the most important areas you think Government should be focusing on in order to achieve this?
3. How active should the Government be in tackling online harms? To what extent do you view legislation necessary in tackling this?
4. To what extent has your broadband improved recently?
5. British tech start-ups are vital to the UK tech industry. What more can we do to support our entrepreneurs of the future?

### Additional questions

6. Social media has experienced serious challenges recently. How active should Government be in addressing the challenges posed by social media?
7. How concerned are you that the automation of jobs will put many people out of work? Do you think the creation of new jobs from the tech revolution will be sufficient?
8. Is there any other question you think should have been asked or observation you would like to make?

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> *A UK Strategy for the 4th Industrial Revolution?*, Computer Weekly, 31 May 2018: [link](#)

<sup>2</sup> *Matt Hancock speaking at the Future of Work Summit*, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 14 June 2018: [link](#)

<sup>3</sup> *Matt Hancock speaking at the opening of the Cyber Innovation Centre*, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 26 June 2018: [link](#)