

Beyond the digital divide: a charter for change

We propose a set of four entitlements which we suggest that every individual in the current digital age can reasonably expect:

Entitlement one: all individuals are able to exercise an empowered and informed choice about their use or non-use of ICT.

Entitlement two: all individuals have ready access to the requisite social and technical support, skills and know-how to support their use of ICT.

Entitlement three: all individuals have ready access to ICT-based content and services which are relevant and useful to their needs and interests.

Entitlement four: all individuals have ready access to a full range of ICT hardware and software.

Underpinning these entitlements, we also propose a set of six challenges to our basic assumptions about the digital divide which should inform future discussion and action:

Challenge one: to start from the premise that individuals from all sectors of society can be digitally excluded – not just those who are considered socially disadvantaged in general, or just those who make no use of ICT.

Challenge two: to remember that there is a diverse and wide range of technologies which can be considered as ICTs – not just computers and the internet.

Challenge three: to draw upon the diverse and wide range of activities for which ICTs can be used.

Challenge four: to strive to extend the range of ICT-mediated activities through the involvement of all social groups in the production of digital content and services.

Challenge five: to find ways to make the full range of ICT-based activities visible and viable to all individuals – regardless of their current engagement with ICT.

Challenge six: to seek to match the affordances of ICTs with the everyday needs, interests and desires of individuals.