# Bridging the AI divide: Accenture and UK government push for inclusive upskilling



Generative AI is reshaping life and work across the UK, offering significant potential for economic growth and innovation. But without urgent action on digital skills, millions risk being left behind. Daljish Channa, Accenture’s corporate citizenship lead in the UK, highlights the need to address digital exclusion to ensure AI's benefits are shared across society.

The technology’s ability to simplify tasks, enhance creativity and aid problem-solving is already proving useful for individuals and businesses. Those with limited digital skills, for example, can now use AI to write job applications or manage personal finances—opening up opportunities that were once out of reach. Accenture estimates generative AI could add £736 billion to the UK’s GDP by 2038, provided it is deployed responsibly and paired with workforce reskilling.

Yet access remains deeply unequal. Workers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are far less likely to receive digital training or plan to acquire AI skills. The disparity is stark—these workers are nearly six times less likely to pursue AI skills than university graduates. Across the UK, 8.5 million adults still lack basic digital skills, highlighting a wider digital divide.

To tackle this, Accenture has launched the 'Regenerative AI' initiative, aiming to support over one million people in disadvantaged communities over the next three years. The programme combines access to devices and data with tailored AI literacy training, rooted in the lived experiences of local communities. The goal is not just access, but genuine confidence and competence in using AI.

The UK government is also acting, working with Accenture, Amazon and Microsoft to upskill 7.5 million workers by 2030. Through this partnership, high-quality training materials are freely available to support the country’s wider digital transformation.

Experts stress that effective training must be people-centred. It is not enough to provide tools—programmes must foster trust, relevance and mindset shifts. A recent report warns that unless delivery, skills and trust gaps are closed, the UK could miss out on £485 billion in potential economic value by 2038.

The stakes are high. The UK has a rare opportunity to nearly double its long-term economic growth rate through generative AI—outpacing its G7 peers. A £187 million 'tech first' programme and a growing portfolio of corporate initiatives suggest momentum is building, with a focus on extending reach beyond London and other tech hubs.

To unlock AI’s full potential, the UK must ensure no one is left behind. Collaboration between government, industry, education and communities is essential. By embedding responsible innovation and digital inclusion into AI strategy, the country can lead the way in building a more equitable, future-ready economy.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.consultancy.uk/news/40904/addressing-skills-gap-key-for-uk-making-most-of-ai-opportunities> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://newsroom.accenture.co.uk/english-uk/news/2024/uk-has-potential-to-nearly-double-economic-growth-during-the-next-15-years-from-gen-ai> - Accenture's research indicates that generative AI could nearly double the UK's long-term growth rate, potentially adding up to £736 billion to the annual GDP by 2038. This growth is contingent upon a people-centric approach to AI deployment, which includes reskilling the workforce to effectively utilise the technology. Without such intervention, up to £485 billion in economic value could remain untapped. The study also highlights the need for decisive action from both government and business leaders to realise these benefits.
3. <https://www.accenture.com/gb-en/insights/gen-ai/generating-growth> - Accenture's report outlines how generative AI can drive the UK's economic reinvention. The technology is projected to almost double the nation's long-term growth rate by 2038, surpassing other G7 countries. However, the report warns that without a people-centric approach, £485 billion in economic value could be left untapped. It identifies three key gaps—delivery, skills, and trust—that need to be addressed to fully harness AI's potential. The report also presents five imperatives for AI-powered reinvention to accelerate the UK's growth.
4. <https://newsroom.accenture.co.uk/english-uk/news/2024/accenture-to-help-tackle-the-digital-inclusion-gap-in-disadvantaged-areas-across-the-uk> - Accenture has launched the 'Regenerative AI' initiative to address the UK's digital inclusion gap. Over the next three years, the programme aims to empower over a million people in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities by providing access to devices, data, and AI literacy courses. This initiative is part of Accenture's commitment to equip the current and future workforce with the necessary skills to thrive in the AI era, ensuring that the benefits of technology are accessible to all.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tech-giants-join-government-to-kick-off-plans-to-boost-british-worker-ai-skills> - The UK government has partnered with major tech companies, including Accenture, Amazon, and Microsoft, to upskill 7.5 million British workers in AI skills by 2030. This collaboration aims to equip the workforce with essential AI competencies to boost productivity and support the transformation of the UK's digital economy. The initiative includes making high-quality training materials freely available and investing in digital skills and AI learning programmes for people of all ages and backgrounds.
6. <https://www.enterprisetimes.co.uk/2024/09/16/accenture-launches-regenerative-ai-aiming-to-tackle-ai-skills-gap/> - Accenture's 'Regenerative AI' initiative focuses on four key areas to tackle the AI skills gap in the UK: delivering generative AI lessons to young people in education, providing AI training for job seekers, offering online courses for workers to understand AI, and partnering with community organisations to spread AI education to disadvantaged adults. The programme aims to equip individuals of all ages with the skills to succeed in the AI era, addressing the digital divide and fostering a more inclusive economy.
7. <https://www.cityam.com/london-tech-week-accenture-warns-of-ai-divide-as-starmer-launches-tech-skills-plan/> - During London Tech Week, Prime Minister Keir Starmer unveiled a £187 million 'tech first' programme and the goal of training 7.6 million workers in AI by 2030. Accenture's UK tech lead, Emma Kendrew, highlighted the UK's opportunity to lead globally in AI but cautioned about the widening digital gap. The report illustrates a concerning scenario for the UK's AI preparedness beyond London, emphasising the need for equitable access to AI upskilling across the country.