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# DIGITAL STRATEGY 2025/26


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DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION

# WELCOME

**Welcome to Novus' Digital Strategy, which outlines our vision for developing colleagues' digital capabilities and supporting prison learners to build the skills they need for life after release. Whether in PES or non-PES establishments, digital technology will remain central to how we deliver education.**

Technology changes rapidly, and even a short prison sentence can leave learners at a significant disadvantage. Simple everyday tasks such as tapping a phone to pay for travel, accessing online services, applying for jobs , or interacting with chatbots can feel unfamiliar and daunting. For many, release once felt like entering a foreign country, disconnected from the modern world.

In recent years, Novus has worked to close this gap by embedding digital tools into teaching across all curriculum areas. The introduction of the Digital Education Platform (DEP), alongside Ministry of Justice responsibility for IT equipment, has transformed the digital learning environment. Colleagues have adapted to these changes and used them to enhance lessons, giving learners access to more interactive and relevant resources.

Our strategy focuses on clear objectives: expanding classroom teaching through in-cell technology, exploring how AI can save staff time in lesson planning, and teaching practical digital skills such as navigating the web or recognising online scams. Each of these steps builds learners' confidence and supports their transition back into society.

Safety remains central to everything we do. With limited access to technology in prisons due to security policies, innovation has been key to progress. Despite these restrictions, we have found creative solutions to ensure digital learning is both secure and effective.

This strategy marks the next stage of our journey. We are proud of the progress achieved so far and excited to make an even greater impact in the year ahead. To learn more, visit our website or connect with Novus on LinkedIn.

Many thanks,

**Jayne Hill**
National Digital Learning Lead, Novus



# VISION AND OBJECTIVES

**The digital strategy for Novus is centred around leveraging technology to enhance learning outcomes, improve administrative efficiency, and enrich the overall experience for colleagues and learners. The strategy aims to achieve the following objectives:**

- Enhance the quality of education, and support innovative teaching methodologies.
- Provide learners with a flexible and engaging learning environment.
- Foster a culture of digital literacy and adaptability.
- Embrace Artificial Intelligence to aid colleague wellbeing and to free up time for teachers to concentrate on learners.
- Support Novus colleagues to create high quality interactive digital content to enhance our curriculums
- Streamline administrative processes through use of digital tools, enabling our teachers to plan and develop lessons and resources quickly and more efficiently.
- Support Novus colleagues to use digital tools in line with agreed procedures and best practice, helping them safeguard learners, colleagues, and themselves, ensuring compliance with policies, legal requirements, and professional standards.

# CASE STUDY: TEACHERMATIC IN ACTION

**TeacherMatic is a comprehensive set of tools designed to support teaching colleagues. It includes a wide range of AI generators that help teachers create a variety of materials; everything from lesson plans and quizzes to learning activities and schemes of work , helping to save planning time and maximising classroom time.**

We have been testing the platform across a number of our sites and it has been a real success. One of our colleagues, Alison Brown shares how she uses it and the benefits.

As a teacher, Alison uses TeacherMatic in a number of different ways to refresh lessons and create multiple choice questions that are shared using digital tools. These tools help with:

1. Introducing new topics and concepts
2. Checking learning
3. Creating lesson plans for key topic areas, such as Cultural Capital, British Values and equality and diversity

Additionally, she works with the Chatbot to give learners a live experience of interacting with AI and building their Prompt Craft skills. I.e. asking learners for a question regarding their graphics course, such as what font would be best for a particular audience, how to approach the design and demonstrating how to use correct prompts to get the best response.

As a manager, Alison has demonstrated to tutors how TeacherMatic can aid them in the development areas such as in their ETLA based on planning and refreshing teaching resources. She has also used TeacherMatic to assist the Reading Group in generating a rubric to link with the progress tracker for when a learner hits emerging, developing or mastery.

Also Alison uses TeacherMatic in her role as Virtual Campus Digital Champion (lot level digital support). She recently demonstrated at a training session how TeacherMatic can support teachers in searching for strategies to assist with LDD or to create PowerPoint presentations specific to their course.

*To read more about Alison's experience using TeacherMatic, head over to the article on our website TeacherMatic in action.*

# CASE STUDY: ENHANCING AI SKILLS AT HMP PRESTON

**Learners on the Business Enterprise course at HMP Preston have been developing their digital literacy through a blended learning approach. Led by course teacher Katrina, this method combines traditional teaching with online activities, allowing learners to work at their own pace and promoting flexible learning.**

A key feature of this approach has been the use of prompt sheets. Learners engaged with online tools like the 'Ask the Famous Person' and 'Ask the Expert' generators to enhance their understanding of business concepts. One student asked Bill Gates how profit and loss analysis aids budgeting, then researched and paraphrased the AI-generated response to support his work. Another learner inquired about the VAT registration threshold, using the information to strengthen his knowledge around CT600 documentation and tax obligations.

These activities have encouraged research, analysis, and memory recall, while also supporting the development of digital skills. The strategic use of AI has enriched classroom learning and aligned with HMP Preston's Reading Strategy by encouraging active participation and discussion.

Karina highlighted the effectiveness of AI in her teaching:

*"Prompt craft is now an effective tool in my classroom. Learners submit questions which I input into TeacherMatic, creating live demonstrations that promote engagement and classroom debate. AI also supports my own professional development by identifying knowledge gaps and offering targeted resources."*

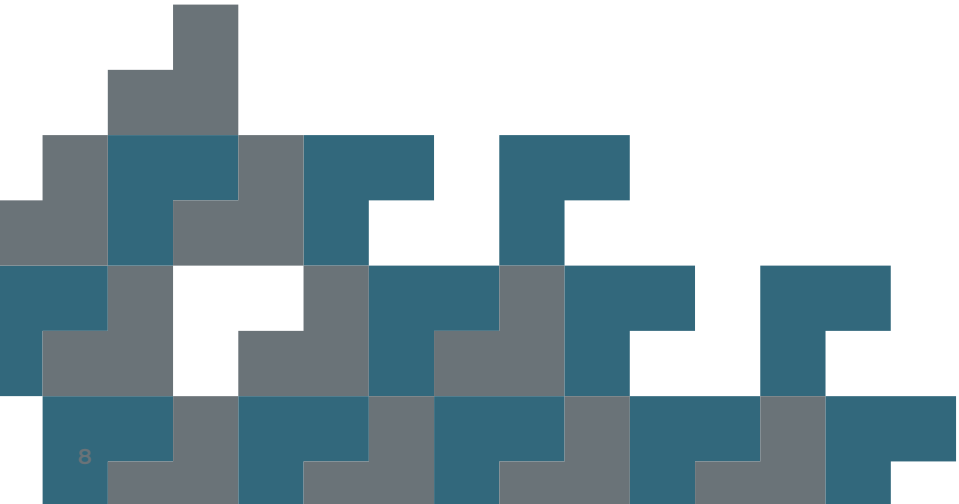
Students have also responded positively. One learner shared:

*"Using AI chat brought a different vibe to the classroom. Hearing responses from figures like Simon Cowell or Lord Alan Sugar made learning more engaging. It was more memorable and fun compared to traditional methods."*

# INDIVIDUALISED LEARNING

**Prioritise learning experiences by integrating technology effectively:**

- ***Building Digital Skills:*** Utilise technology in the classroom and maximising use of computer suites using blended learning rotational methods.
- ***Digitally Blended Learning Classroom:*** Make full use of digital tools, whitelisted websites and Open Borders available in the classroom to create an engaging learner environment.
- ***Virtual Learning Environment (VLE):*** Utilise the current VC2 VLE to enhance classroom delivery, using online resources and use as a blended learning tool where establishments have in cell technology. Embrace new VLE platforms when released.
- ***Interactive Content:*** Develop multimedia-rich content, including videos, interactive simulations, and virtual reality to enhance engagement and understanding.
- ***Adaptive Learning:*** Implement adaptive approaches to personalise learning paths and support diverse learning styles, utilising artificial intelligence to speed up processes.
- ***Online Assessments:*** Introduce the provided digital screening tool across all PES departments and increase use of secure online assessment in other departments to provide more efficiency with initial assessment, data sharing and speed up end exam results for learners.



# CASE STUDY: USING DIGITAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE EDUCATION MENTORING PROGRAMME AT HMP WYMOTT

HMP Wymott have been utilising digital resources to support the education mentoring provision. Over the past few months, the education department at Wymott have grown their mentoring programme from 3 education mentors to 11+. These mentors are recruited and managed in line with the Novus mentoring strategy, using standardised paperwork and resources. Each mentor is supported by a class teacher who helps guide their Personal Development Plan (PDP), aligned with mentoring apprenticeship standards in behaviour and attitudes.

Curriculum Manager Kathryn oversees quality assurance, ensuring fair recruitment, targeted training, and CPD aligned with individual goals.

### *Embedding Digital Skills*

A key element of the PDP process is setting targets and encouraging regular training, where digital tools have played a central role. Mentors are enrolled on AIM Awards eLearning modules via Virtual Campus (VC2), with most having completed at least one course since starting the programme.

Mentors are also tasked with supporting learners in accessing VC digital resources, particularly in English and maths. They've explored City & Guilds materials and helped others navigate BKSB eLearning modules and skills checks.

### *Building Digital and Employability Skills*

Mentors take on duties that enhance their digital and soft skills, including:

- Creating monthly class newsletters, celebrating achievements.
- Designing classroom resources, such as laminated bookmarks for maths.
- Writing 'How-to' guides for topics learners find challenging.
- Organising end-of-week quizzes, boosting engagement.

These activities not only develop mentors' digital literacy but also strengthen teamwork, communication, and employability, making the mentoring experience valuable for both mentors and learners alike.

# COLLEAGUE DEVELOPMENT

**Empower colleagues to effectively incorporate technology into their teaching practices:**

- ***Professional Development:*** Offer digital support and training; remotely, face-to-face and self-directed to help colleagues leverage digital tools and pedagogical techniques.
- ***Provide expert guidance and support*** in the use of Authority ICT systems and platforms to maximise efficiency and effectiveness.
- ***Artificial Intelligence:*** Promote and inspire colleagues to purposefully, consciously and ethically employ AI for the improvement of teaching and learning.
- ***Collaborative Platforms:*** Engagement and collaborations using online spaces such as the Digital Practice Community on Teams and Digi Hub on Moodle. Colleagues can utilise to share best practices, provide peer to peer support and receive updates on new digital learning innovations.
- ***Blended Learning Strategies:*** Encourage the use of blended learning approaches that combine traditional and current digital enhanced teaching methods for a well-rounded learning experience. At establishments where it is available, encourage the use of in cell technology to support classroom learning.



# CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING THE DIGITAL NEEDS OF LEARNERS AND COLLEAGUES AT HMP BIRMINGHAM

The Novus Digital Learning Team held digital strategy meetings with education managers to support digital provision across prisons. Following one session, Kate Luntley, Education Manager at HMP Birmingham, shared the strategy with her whole team—sparking major progress.

### *Digital Skills Assessment*

The first major initiative was introducing a digital skills assessment for all new learners, based on government guidance. Designed collaboratively, it covers digital footprint awareness, online safety, and social media use. It's now embedded across all curriculum areas, helping staff understand learners' starting points and tailor support accordingly.

### *Digital Skills in Courses*

Digital skills are now embedded in teaching. In mentoring, learners design newsletters using desktop publishing software. In business, learners use Kiosks to request course-relevant library resources. Learners also now complete Personal Learning Plans digitally, boosting confidence and digital independence.

### *Colleague Digital Development*

Staff development has also been prioritised. Colleagues receive regular CPD, with a focus on AI tools like TeacherMatic, which supports lesson planning and classroom activities. Most staff now have premium access and actively use it to improve teaching.

### *Collaboration and Sharing Best Practice*

To promote innovation, HMP Birmingham holds 'share and tell' sessions and learning walks, allowing staff to share successes and observe digital skill development first-hand. These have improved collaboration and inspired new ideas across departments.

Due to the success of these initiatives, the digital skills assessment will be shared across West Midlands sites and potentially wider, with the support of the Novus Quality Team.

# COLLEAGUE ENGAGEMENT

**Strengthen communication and engagement among stakeholders:**

- ***Learner Portal:*** Utilise and populate Authority approved digital platforms for learners to access their personal learner plan, assessment outcomes, reading screeners, LDD information and learning resources.
- ***Distribute*** digital information in colleague update emails, provide digital updates and demonstrations, drive and promote Digital Awareness month.
- ***Maintain*** and update digital pages on the Hub (Novus colleague intranet i.e. the digital month archive).
- ***Share*** good practice and new initiatives through social media channels to keep Novus colleagues and partners informed about events, updates, and important information.
- ***Virtual Collaboration:*** Organise webinars, cross lot team calls, and engage with team spaces to share and support others, utilising the Digital Practice Community space to provide frequent and regular updates.
- ***Support*** other areas of the Novus team to ensure digital runs throughout all practices and process, especially quality and enrichment.





# ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

***We aim to facilitate independence and support progression through enabling appropriate access to technology for all Novus users.***

## Accessibility Tools and Hardware include:

- Reading Pen
- Speech-to-text
- Read aloud
- Headphones
- Colour Veil
- Screen Magnifier
- Adjust cursor and mouse settings
- Narrator tool (this explains what the user is doing on screen, detailing each movement and click of the mouse).
- Adjustable contrast and display size settings
- Adjustable contrast settings
- Keyboard and mouse alternatives and adaptations
- Talking calculators

The Novus Digital Lead work with Novus Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators, Occupational Health and Novus Managers to agree safe and appropriate use of assistive technology for colleagues and learners.

***Web Accessibility:*** We follow Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) to create online content and platforms to support all users.

***Alternative Formats:*** We aim to accommodate different learning, physical and sensory needs through the provision of digital resources in multiple formats, such as audio, transcripts, and captions. We can also provide printable versions of resources for in-cell activity.

# DATA SECURITY AND PRIVACY

**Prioritise the security of digital assets and sensitive information:**

- ***Cybersecurity Measures:*** Implement strong cybersecurity practices, including regular software updates, firewalls, and encryption, to safeguard company data.
- ***Data Privacy Compliance:*** Adhere to UK data protection regulations (e.g., GDPR) and ensure transparent data handling practices.
- ***Security Protocol:*** Adhere to IT security processes and procedures when using prison computer networks. This includes the Digital Education Platform (DEP), MOJO, Virtual Campus, Education System (where it is still utilised) and private provider systems.



# CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

**Regularly assess and adapt the digital strategy to evolving needs and technologies:**

- ***Performance Reviews:*** Implement quality assurance initiatives to review classroom delivery and use of digitally blended learning approaches through digital learning walks and review of teaching resources.
- ***Quality Improvement Plans:*** Inclusion of digital action plans within establishments QIP, regular reviews and updating based on organisational needs.
- ***Regular Reviews:*** Conduct regular reviews of Novus digital strategy, digital tools and the digital learning offer, ensuring it meets the needs of Novus establishments and is in line with Novus' Strategic goals.

# CASE STUDY: UTILISING TRIPTICO IN THE MATHS PROVISION AT HMP BERWYN

The maths department at HMP Berwyn has embraced digital tools to increase learner engagement. When one maths teacher created an interactive PowerPoint game but couldn't use it due to security restrictions, she reached out for support. The site's digital champion contacted Triptico's creator, David, who transformed the idea into a brand-new game within 24 hours.

Now live under Bonus Resources on the Triptico platform, Number Challenge is a fast-paced, Countdown-style maths game. Learners are given a target number and a set of digits to reach the total using basic operations—addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

Perfect for individual, group, or whole-class play, the game works well as a starter, revision tool, or brain break. It encourages mathematical thinking, boosts mental arithmetic, and adds a fun, competitive element to maths lessons. It's also a valuable tool for building employability skills like teamwork, digital literacy, decision-making, and adaptability.

Hannah, the maths teacher who initiated the idea, shared: *"Triptico created 'Number Challenge' based on my resource idea. I use it daily, it's great for mental arithmetic and even works as an assessment tool. The learners love it and enjoy learning through play."*

One learner added: *"I'm not usually good at maths, but this game has helped me improve. I like trying to beat my high score or a friend's score, it makes me want to keep practising."*

The game is now available to all sites via Triptico. Maths teams are encouraged to try it and share their feedback.

## CASE STUDY: USING AI TO ENHANCE READING SKILLS AT HMP HUMBER

To mark World Book Day, the English class at HMP Humber embraced AI tools to support reading and creative writing skills, integrating technology into literacy-based activities.

One key activity involved using the *"Chat with TeacherMatic AI"* generator to co-create a fictional class text. Learners collaborated to write a prompt: *"Write an introduction to a fictional text, no more than 100 words, include setting, protagonist and allude to a theme of conspiracies."*

After generating the text, learners reviewed it paragraph by paragraph, making targeted edits to elements like characters and setting. These edits helped develop their understanding of narrative structure, direct speech, and descriptive detail. Once the final version was completed, learners designed front covers as part of a workshop-wide competition, adding a visual element to the project.

The AI tool supported an open and interactive learning environment, encouraging learners to refine prompts and clearly see how changes impacted the story. This enhanced their confidence in editing and creative decision-making.

One teacher noted: *"I use ChatGPT frequently, so find TeacherMatic quite straightforward to use."*

Another shared that the tool has transformed reading comprehension activities: *"We use TeacherMatic regularly. It allows us to create texts based on learners' interests—from news to YouTube—tailored with*

*appropriate classroom language. Engagement and personal buy-in have increased significantly."*

While various AI generators have been tested, the open-ended chat function remains the most effective for engaging learners.

By incorporating AI into lessons, learners not only celebrated World Book Day creatively but also developed valuable digital and literacy skills, preparing them for the modern digital world.



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For digital support contact

**digitallearning@novus.ac.uk**

> ***Technology will never replace great teachers, but technology in the hands of great teachers is transformational.***
>
> George Couros