



4 February 2015

## VODAFONE DELIVERS NATIONWIDE SCHOOLS PROJECT TO BRIDGE DIGITAL DIVIDE

- Thousands of primary schools across the UK will benefit from a new initiative to help engage parents in the computing curriculum and to encourage children and their families to share more digital activities
- **My Tech Family** backed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, tackles the concerns of UK parents that the rate at which technology is developing is creating a divide between the generations
- New Digital Style Quiz to help parents and children understand what motivates each other's use of technology

Vodafone today announces the launch of a nationwide schools project designed to help 17,000 primary schools across the UK engage parents in the new computing curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

Supported by the Vodafone Foundation and co-created with schools in partnership with The Parent Zone, My Tech Family is an exciting new initiative aimed to encourage children and their families to share digital activities; helping to bridge the growing digital divide in UK homes.

A recent study from Vodafone conducted by The Parent Zone revealed that a third of parents wish they had more experience of using technology to join in with their child's digital life. Of the 1000 parents surveyed, 63 per cent also stated that the rate at which technology is developing is widening the generation gap and changing the way their children communicate with them.<sup>2</sup>

The study also revealed that while children are increasingly engaging with the digital world today, parents are not always sharing in this experience with them. While children are spending more time using technology on their own, only a fifth of parents share something on a digital device with their child once a week.

The My Tech Family initiative provides resources for primary schools that are designed to extend beyond the classroom, allowing parents and children to explore their shared digital world at home. To help teachers introduce My Tech Family into lessons for all primary school classes from Year 3 to Year 8, there are free, downloadable resources available – including a Digital Style Quiz, presentations, lesson plans and a workbook.<sup>3</sup>

The activities will help children discover their digital learning style by taking a simple quiz, and by encouraging other family members to take it too, help children explore the online world safely with their families while learning and

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enjoying a range of digital activities together.<sup>4</sup> From making a movie, to building a game, the resources for parents and teachers highlight a wide range of fun and creative digital activities for families to try. For more information on the My Tech Family initiative and how schools and families can get involved please go to:

[www.vodafone.com/parents/mytechfamily](http://www.vodafone.com/parents/mytechfamily).

Ed Vaizey, Digital Economy Minister, Department for Culture, Media and Sport said: "I am pleased to see that Vodafone and The Parent Zone are continuing their great work to help schools and families keep children safe online. The "My Tech Family" initiative not only helps to close the generational digital divide that exists in many families, it can also be a valuable tool in promoting online safety. I hope it will be a tremendous success."

Emer Boulter, Head of Sustainability, Vodafone UK said: "When children are growing up in a world where people spend more time on digital activities than they do sleeping, we want technology to enhance the time families spend together. With today's emphasis in the new school curriculum for children to acquire skills that prepare them for life in a digital world, 'My Tech Family' supports families in developing the right skills, beyond the classroom. Crossing the digital divide is more than just teaching coding in schools, but needs to tackle the growing gap between the digital engagement of children and their parents. By encouraging families to share their online experiences we hope to create opportunities for families to discuss what children do online, to help them to find safe things to do online, and to build digitally confident families."

The initiative is being launched in schools nationwide from today following the completion of a successful pilot in four schools across the UK during Dec 2014 – Jan 2015. These included schools from north and south London and schools from rural Wiltshire and the town of Rugby.

Kevin Sandall, ICT Teacher, St Katherine's Junior School, in the Savernake Forest, just outside Marlborough (one of the pilot schools) said: "For so long the internet message to parents has been - "Don't use it! Keep your kids away from this, it's dangerous!" But what can you do? It's there in children's lives and it's enriching. It was really refreshing to have something that embraced the Internet in a positive way."

Some of the examples of how children shared technology with their families during the schools pilot include:

- A child showed her grandparents how to watch a live feed from CCTV cameras on the family farm so they could watch cows being milked
- A child taught her aunt, who lives some distance from the family to do FaceTime successfully
- A child downloaded a recipe with his mother and tried cooking with her

Vicki Shotbolt, CEO, The Parent Zone said: "From the work we've already done with Vodafone and schools on Digital Parenting we know that schools are crying out for more support to help them deliver the skills in the new computing curriculum. Engaging parents and families in the new computing curriculum is essential to helping schools share the

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opportunities of a digital age whilst delivering real safety benefits. We already know that hundreds of schools are interested in doing the My Tech Family programme this year.”

Andrew Dunnett, Group Director Sustainability & Foundation said: “This is a great extension to our already successful and long-running programme for parents and schools, which will see 1.2 million of our annual Digital Parenting magazines released to schools and other public bodies during this school year. As part of our Mobile for Good programme we’re delighted to be partnering with The Parent Zone on this next phase, which we hope will continue to help children thrive in today’s increasingly digital times.”

Join in the online conversation on Vodafone’s My Tech Family initiative using #MyTechFamily on Twitter or Facebook.

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## Notes to editors:

1. For more information on the new computing curriculum please go to:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-computing-programmes-of-study>

The curriculum links include:

- Use technology purposefully to create, organise, store, manipulate and retrieve digital data
- Use technology respectfully and responsibly
- Use and combine a variety of software on a range of digital devices to accomplish given goals, including analysing information

2. The research was conducted by The Parent Zone on behalf of Vodafone UK with over 1000 parents from across the UK at the end of 2014.

3. The core materials have been designed to run over a week. Teachers may extend the project to a half or whole term or integrate it into other curriculum areas including Maths, English and E-safety.

4. To take the Digital Style Quiz and identify what your own digital learning style is please go to:

[www.digitalstylequiz.co.uk](http://www.digitalstylequiz.co.uk). Designed for both adults and children, the quiz will tell you about your learning style and what kind of digital activities really suit you and why. The quiz was developed following a thorough literature review by Patrick Fagan, one of the UK’s leading psychology academics. It is not a scientific tool but has been developed to help parents understand their child’s online preferences and how these can help him or her to learn.

## About The Parent Zone

The Parent Zone is a social enterprise making the internet work for families. Working with schools, police forces and parents around the country they help families to get the most from a digital age whilst minimising the risks.

## About The Vodafone Foundation

The Vodafone Foundation's Mobile for Good programme combines Vodafone's charitable giving and technology to make a difference in the world. Globally, the Vodafone Foundation supports projects that are focused on delivering public benefit through the use of mobile technology across the areas of health, education and disaster relief. The Vodafone Foundation is a registered charity in England and Wales (registered charity number 1089625).

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