

Leeds digital tech sector thrives as mix of corporates and startups collaborate for success

- **Leeds' digital tech sector, now worth £1bn, is thriving as startups seek to emulate Yorkshire unicorns Sky Betting & Gaming and CallCredit**
- **Digital tech business births in the city totalled 168 in 2016**
- **34,742 people are employed in digital tech jobs in the Leeds travel to work region**
- **Leeds tech workers have a digital tech turnover of £83,000 per employee**
- **Yorkshire-born entrepreneur Mike Jackson work to support ambitious Tech founders across the country**

Leeds, 27 September 2018

A winning combination of public and private sector businesses is helping to build Leeds into a major digital tech hub and encouraging startups right across the region. Leeds and surrounding Yorkshire cities and towns are seeing an explosion of startups and new enterprises, encouraged by organisations like NHS Digital and the Open Data Institute.

Yorkshire's leading universities and large student population are also a factor behind the growth of the startup community. The city has strong expertise in healthtech and a growing fintech scene supported by FinTech North. Leeds has also been called the best city for open data in the country, with ODI Leeds one of a handful of pioneer nodes of the Open Data Institute.

Tech Nation On Tour will take place at ODI Leeds on 27 September when entrepreneurs, founders and tech ecosystem experts will assemble to debate the opportunities for developing startups across the Yorkshire region. At the event, entrepreneurs will meet Mike Jackson, Tech Nation's new Entrepreneur Success Director, who joins Tech Nation to help ambitious entrepreneurs across the country to realise their dreams.

Yorkshire-born Mike's role is to build support for tech founders in early-stage and scaling businesses. He will work on developing Tech Nation's highly regarded programmes and share his own experience and insights of developing entrepreneurial businesses after many years in the technology and startup sector.

Data on Leeds will be presented by Tech Nation's insights team which will feed into a discussion on the challenges faced by local entrepreneurs and startups. The panel discussion will be moderated by Kane Fulton, Tech Nation's Entrepreneur Engagement Manager for Yorkshire & Humber and will feature Sam Chapman, chief innovation officer and co-founder of The Floop, from Sheffield; Sarah Tulip, director at Software Cloud, Leeds; Stuart Clarke, festival director of Leeds Digital festival, Anna Sutton, director at The Data Shed and Tracey Johnson, director at Barnsley Digital Media Centre.

Jackson, has worked in the IT sector for more than 25 years, both for big companies like Microsoft and latterly as an entrepreneur and angel investor. He founded early-stage tech incubator Webstart in Bristol and is passionate about building a similar supportive community and network for entrepreneurs across the country.

Mike is recruiting a team of 11 Entrepreneur Engagement Managers whose job it is to help company founders across the countries and regions of the UK to network and engage with other entrepreneurs, investors, advisors and local influencers. "I'm passionate about the Tech Nation message that we can build thriving tech clusters and connect entrepreneurs right across the United Kingdom. To do that we are going to deliver growth programmes that are truly national and accessible from anywhere in the country and help local ecosystems to grow and expand," Jackson says.

The Tech Nation Entrepreneur Success Director continues: "As a country we are not always great at collaborating, sharing successes and learning from each other. By building a national network of like-minded ambitious entrepreneurs, Tech Nation will play its part to ensure the whole of the UK shares in the benefits a successful digital tech sector brings."

"I'm really glad to be back in Yorkshire today and it's exciting to see how much Leeds is changing with lots of young startup companies like Cocoon, Kwizzbit and Synap. The tech arms of public institutions like NHS Digital are also helping to build the tech community here and help create strong centres of excellence."

Sarah Tulip, director at Software Cloud, in Leeds, said: "Leeds has a great reputation for innovation, there are lots of large corporate clients here and many ambitious technologists. With three universities in the city there is also a great youthful atmosphere and a lot of fresh talent."

Leeds is home to a thriving annual Digital Festival, which is now the largest in the North. In 2018 it included 170 events, 650 speakers and 20,000 attendees, celebrating all things digital from across Yorkshire. The city also hosts a number of events aimed at encouraging diversity including the Empowering Women with Science & Tech and She Does Digital events. In 2017 the [Northern Power Women Live](#) event was held in Leeds.

Stuart Clarke, festival director of Leeds Digital Festival, tries to encourage startups from the South to consider relocating to the North through his [London to Leeds](#) campaign. "Over the last few years we've seen Leeds's digital sector really thrive and the festival reflects that. It may be easier to start a business in London but once you've got going, it's expensive. Why not come to Leeds or another Yorkshire city where you can scale up, private accommodation costs are a third, and there is a great deal of talent. Many people are now coming to have a look and choosing to stay."

With HMRC relocating 6,000 staff to Leeds in 2020, Leeds's future as a thriving digital hub is stepping up a gear. Outside tech, Burberry opened an office in the city last year and Channel 4 has shortlisted Leeds for its new HQ, with support from the All In. Leeds campaign

comprising 50 creative agencies who are working together to show the commercial broadcaster what they have to offer.