Digital leaders debate 'ticking timebomb' skills crisis in Parliament

2 years ago

Technology industry leaders gathered in the Houses of Parliament last night to discuss the challenges posed by AI, the role of education in equipping young people with digital skills and the worrying lack of diversity in the UK's talent pipeline.

Speaking at the Parliament Street think tank's Digital Skills Summit on Monday night, which was hosted by Dean Russell MP for Watford and chaired by Steven George-Hilley of Centropy PR, a panel of experts debated the steps that should be taken to improve access to digital education for the next generation. One audience attendee described the skills crisis facing the UK as a 'ticking timebomb' that would severely hurt the economy if left unaddressed.

"After university, we need to allow people in companies to look towards learning. We need to focus on upskilling people and give them the time to adapt," said marketing expert Bordeaux & Burgundy managing director Joanna Reynolds.

FDM group CIO Jonathan Young said, "Many people do not realise what they can actually bring to the tech field. Some skills need highlighting to encourage candidates more to realise what potential they can offer to diversify and drive efficiencies."

Meanwhile iNx director Natalie Whittlesey said: "The core subjects that we have are Maths, English and Science. I think we should add technology or digital to that and teach kids digital skills from a young age."

She continued, "You want to see aptitude from a person, rather than simply a CV to judge whether a person is fit for a role."

IFS chief human resources officer Kate Bishop said, "How does the system deliver young people with the

right skills for the workplace? We need to inform, as employers, the education sector what must be done to help the UK continue their talent.

Young Enterprise CEO Sharon Davies said: "More employers should ask themselves, does this position really need a degree? Experience from projects which utilise mindset and a range of other skills should be considered more important to fulfilling a job role."

The Institute of Coding director Professor Rachid Hourizi said, "Teaching large blocks of skills at one point in time strikes me as the fundamental problem. I want to challenge the idea that if we found the right skills now, that would be enough.

"The way we structure our response needs to change. The response to life long learning. Nationally we are not set up to deliver a lifelong pathway."

Conservative MP for Watford Dean Russell said, "AI is much more consumer-led, however, can affect different industries. There have been great positives for the medical sector but presents varying issues of copyright within the creative industries."