

PLEXAL AND MY LIFE MY SAY LAUNCH INCLUSIVE DESIGN ACCELERATOR SUPPORTED BY MAYOR OF LONDON



4TH APRIL 2019

- **Social Inclusion Unit seeks to help industry do more to include underrepresented groups**
- **Sadiq Khan backs new inclusive design accelerator, OpenDoor, which will support solutions that improve social inclusion**
- **New study reveals only 30% of people think tech companies enable excluded people and communities to participate in society**
- **A third of people think that social exclusion will become worse as a result of Brexit**

Thursday 4th April 2019, London: Today, the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan is supporting the launch of a new inclusive design accelerator, OpenDoor. The accelerator, created by the Social Inclusion Unit (SIU) at Plexal in partnership with political engagement charity My Life My Say, will help scale innovative designs, services and products that boost levels of social inclusion and make it easier for people facing inclusion challenges to play a more active role in society and the economy. The specific challenge areas will be determined by engaging industry and underrepresented groups over the coming months.

OpenDoor is being announced as research undertaken by the SIU reveals that only 30% of people believe that technology companies help excluded people and communities to participate in society.

Exploring people's attitudes towards social inclusion and how technology companies can help, the study revealed more than half (54%) of people surveyed believe the government has a responsibility to support social inclusion, while ordinary people (49%) and businesses (30%) were also seen to have a responsibility. Out of all types of businesses, more than half of respondents (54%) believe that technology companies have a responsibility to support social inclusion.

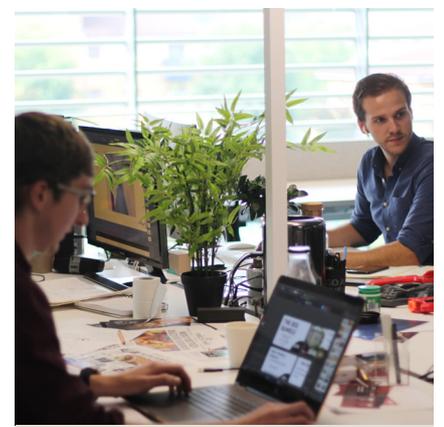
The study also reveals that a third of those surveyed think that social exclusion will worsen as a result of Brexit, with over two thirds (72%) of these respondents saying they feel the UK will become a less tolerant society, and six in 10 (63%) believing there will be more discrimination. People also expect the pressures on society to worsen, with over half (59%) predicting increased food prices and cuts to spending on social services.

People are nevertheless positive about the potential of tech companies to support social inclusion, with over half (55%) saying they have a more positive than negative impact on people's lives. Two thirds (65%) note technology companies' role in educating and teaching people new skills. A further three in five (63%) say tech companies help people from different backgrounds communicate with each other.

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Responding to the findings, Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, said: *“The SIU’s mission is to bring the voices of the people who are typically excluded to the forefront, to support innovations that allow them to participate more fully in society and to work with industry to enact measures that deliver tangible improvement to social inclusion.*”

This work is especially urgent given the challenges ahead with Brexit: we cannot allow our exit, or the debate around the terms of our exit, to make social inclusion any worse. We cannot let inequality and alienation become normalised, or look to everyone else to pick up the slack. This is a challenge for us all to take up.”

The OpenDoor accelerator is being launched in response to the SIU’s mission of bringing the voices of the people who are typically excluded to the forefront. It’s based on SIU insights that how we shape technology directly influences people’s access – or lack of access – to quality of life, work, and leisure opportunities. Delivered by Plexal’s innovation team, together with My Life My Say, a bespoke 12-week programme will support cohort members to develop and scale innovations that allow everyone to access opportunities and participate more fully in society. For example, the solutions could address the ease at which underrepresented groups access employment or transport opportunities, or build empathy and user-centric design principles into everyday products and services people from under-represented groups use.

Successful entrants to the programme must be able to demonstrate that their proposed innovations are directly shaped by insights from their target audience.

Applications to the OpenDoor accelerator open on 3 June 2019. Ahead of this, the SIU is welcoming interested organisations to get in touch if they would like to sponsor or support the accelerator, and help define the challenges it will focus on. The SIU will also be holding a roundtable to collaboratively define the challenge areas and focus of the programme, as well as an Open Innovation Day that will give potential applicants a chance to collaborate and partner with each other before applying.

Find out more (and access the full report) at Plexal.com/social-inclusion

Andrew Roughan, managing director, Plexal, said: *“As the innovation centre at Here East occupying the site of the 2012 Olympic Games Press & Broadcast Centre, Plexal takes responsibility for supporting the community around us – especially people who face complex inclusion challenges. With the Social Inclusion Unit, we’re proud to use our connections with innovators and large organisations to convene a broad spectrum of people together around the challenge.*”

By launching OpenDoor, we intend to help scale the impact of innovation, build on what works and address the gaps. It’s our belief that long-term sustainability needs to balance financial viability with social purpose.”

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Andrew Roughan
Managing Director,
Plexal

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Mete Coban, chief executive of My Life My Say, said: *“It’s critical that the UK does better when it comes to making society and our workplaces for inclusive and genuinely diverse – not just because it’s the right thing to do but because it also allows us to tap into a talent pool that’s currently under-utilised. Through OpenDoor, the Social Inclusion Unit intends to scale innovative ideas or solutions that boost social inclusion, while ensuring that under-represented groups are part of the process throughout. As we prepare for Brexit, this work has never been more urgent.”*



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Mete Coban,
Chief Executive
My Life My Say

Notes to Editors

For more information, or to arrange interviews with spokespeople, please contact plexal@wcommunications.co.uk or **07452 882001**.

About Plexal

Plexal is an innovation centre and coworking space located in the fast-growing Here East digital and creative campus in London's Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park.

Collaboration is at the heart of Plexal's approach to innovation. Its innovation team delivers bespoke programmes for clients like Innovate UK and Transport for London, and specialises in forging connections between industry, academia, investors, startups and scaleups to tackle some of the biggest challenges facing society while getting ideas market-ready. The innovation team's areas of focus are mobility, cybersecurity and social inclusion.

Plexal has also been appointed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to deliver the London Office for Rapid Cybersecurity Advancement (LORCA): a three-year innovation programme aimed at scaling cybersecurity solutions that are needed most by industry.

Designed as a 'mini-city' (it has its own indoor park, high street and prototyping workshop), startup and scaleup members of Plexal's workspace benefit from a comprehensive programme of events and in-house professional services. Members work in areas like AI, healthtech, cybersecurity, fintech, the Internet of Things, AR, VR and more.

Plexal was launched in 2017 and was founded by clients of specialist real estate investment advisory company Delancey.

For more information visit: plexal.com

About My Life My Say

MLMS is an international youth led non-partisan charity whose mission is to create an age of political engagement that will deliver greater social inclusion and equality. It achieves this through creating the space for dialogue across generations and communities.

MLMS is best known for championing the voice of 4.5 million young Brits in the Brexit negotiations through our outreach events, research, and advocacy work leading the All-Party Parliamentary Group on a Better Brexit for Young People (APPG-BBYP). MLMS has also been widely recognised by the media and Westminster as a significant contributor to the high youth turnout at the 2017 UK General Elections.

Find out more at mylifemysay.org.uk



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