

London start-up Bright Little Labs partners with EDF Energy to launch curriculum materials to 12,000 teachers

Submitted by: Bright Little Labs

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Free materials launched to teach kids about internet safety and how the internet works.

Collaboration highlights commitment to diversity in STEM education and making computer science accessible and fun.

London, 22nd November 2018 - Bright Little Labs (<https://www.detectivedot.org>), the London-based startup behind Detective Dot, a kids media company on a mission to inspire the next generation of coders, announced today that it is releasing free primary school curriculum materials in collaboration with EDF Energy's digital schools programme, the Pod (<https://jointhepod.org/campaigns/worldwideweb>)

The two companies have collaborated to develop innovative materials to teach children about how the internet works and how to stay safe online.

The materials introduce the World Wide Web and its natural equivalent, the Wood Wide Web. They explain how digital information is sent through the cables of the World Wide Web just as nutrients are sent through the fungi network of the Wood Wide Web. Children will learn about the interconnectedness of living organisms and the interconnectedness of networked devices.

The materials will also introduce children to the mysterious world of the CIA (<https://www.ciakids.org>) (Children's Intelligence Agency), a top-secret organisation created by Bright Little Labs to encourage kids to carry out STEM based activities on and offline. From an A3 wall poster that depicts the symmetry between the network of underground wires and the natural network of roots and mycelium, to specially designed stickers for students, these free materials are available on EDF Energy's Pod website now: <https://jointhepod.org/>

The two companies have been working together on this initiative since 2017. Bright Little Labs were the winners of EDF Energy's 2017 Pulse awards (<https://www.wired.co.uk/article/startups-bring-fresh-air-to-energy>) given to innovative products or services that address the digital skills gap by sparking children's interest in STEM. Bright Little Labs were chosen thanks to their unique lo-fi, narrative-led approach to digital literacy, helping to engage kids from a diverse range of backgrounds into a career in STEM.

In 2014, England was the first country in the world to make coding compulsory for 5 year olds and over (<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/sep/04/coding-school-computing-children-programming>). The materials launched today will be key resources for teachers and parents to demystify the new language and core concepts of the school curriculum.

Sophie Deen (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sophie-deen-0359b93b?originalSubdomain=uk>), founder and CEO of Bright Little Labs, commented: "In a world of post-truth, job-automation and internet-enabled teddy bears that could be snooping on you, digital literacy and critical thinking are key. It's imperative that all children, regardless of their background, have access to these 21st century skills and we've

seen first hand that a hi-tech spy agency with empowering role models like Detective Dot is a great way to achieve this. Without the relevant skills to meet market demands, young people will find it difficult to compete and contribute to economic development. At Bright Little Labs we believe stories are the key to changing the future of the tech industry. We wouldn't be where we are today without the EDF Energy Pulse Award and it has given us a platform to certify our place in the 'edutainment' industry."

Robyn Thorn, Digital Education Programme Manager at The Pod, said: "Digital Education Programme Manager at The Pod, said: we're delighted to be working with Bright Little Labs on this innovative approach to internet safety. The World Wide Web is a fascinating phenomenon and we're really excited about the launch of the new resources."

For media enquiries:

See Bright Little Labs media pack here

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About Bright Little Labs

Bright Little Labs is building a kids media giant for the 21st century. The company make interactive stories for kids aged 5+, to promote critical thinking, computer science and equality. Their flagship story is about Detective Dot, a tech-whizz who is on a dangerous mission from the Children's Intelligence Agency (CIA). The company provides a lo-fi and accessible route into coding, with kids joining the CIA to complete STEM-focused 'missions' on and offline which complement the UK Computing Curriculum.

Starting on Kickstarter in 2016, Bright Little Labs was part of the Cabinet Office backed, tech-for-good accelerator Bethnal Green Ventures. They now have users in over 30 countries and are widely recognised for their story-led approach to 21st Century skills (recipient of EDF Energy Stem Pulse Award 2017, named 'Top Coding Toy for Kids' by The Independent in 2017

(<https://www.independent.co.uk/extras/indybest/kids/gifts/best-coding-toys-for-kids-games-2017-apps-software-laptop-robot-fo> and the Evening Standard

(<https://www.standard.co.uk/shopping/esbest/kids/toys-games/best-educational-coding-toys-and-games-for-kids-a3826066.htm> in 2018). Their founder and CEO, Sophie Deen, is an active advocate for diversity in kids media and in

the tech industry. She has been named one of Computer Weekly's 'Most influential women in UK IT' 2017, Barclays/Everywoman 'Startup Founder of the Year' 2017, the British Interactive Media Association's 'Innovator' in 2017 and London Tech Week 'Changemaker' in 2018 for her work to inspire children into STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths).

For more information, please visit www.detectivedot.org

About EDF Energy's Pod

The Pod is an interactive website and educational platform for teachers, community group leaders and children. It offers free lesson plans, practical activities, assemblies, films, games and information, all with cross-curricular links.

Interesting Stats

Digital skills gap

A study by the European Commission in 2017 shows that nine out of ten jobs will require digital skills over the next decade, but that 44% of Europeans aged between 16 and 74 do not have the skills to tackle this transition. (EuroScientist) (<https://www.euroscientist.com/digital-skills/>)

British businesses are struggling to recruit qualified workers in high-tech fields at a cost of more than £1.5 billion a year (2018) (STEM Learning)

(<https://www.stem.org.uk/news-and-views/news/acute-high-tech-skills-shortage-revealed>)

70 percent of teachers believe there is not enough focus on digital skills and learning in the National Curriculum (BIMA)

(<https://mobilemarketingmagazine.com/digital-skills-gap-is-still-threatening-uk-growth-says-bima-digital-day>)

77% of the UK population had the basic level of digital skills (IPSOS)

(<https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/basic-digital-skills-uk-report-2017>)

Young women are also a third less likely to learn new digital skills. (CNET)

(<https://www.cnet.com/news/a-lack-of-digital-skills-could-be-hurting-young-professional-women/>)

Nearly half of current jobs could be automated by 2055 (Mckinsey report)

(<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/future-of-organizations-and-work/jobs-lost-jobs-gained-what-the-future-of-work-w>)

More than 850,000 UK public sector jobs could be lost by 2030 through automation (The Guardian)

(<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/oct/25/850000-public-sector-jobs-automated-2030-oxford-university-deloitte-study>)

The creative and digital sectors will “need 1.2 million new workers between 2012 and 2022 (UK Commission for Employment and Skills)

(https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/432639/15.06.04._Digital_

Coding education around the world

England made coding mandatory in primary schools in 2015, alongside Maths and English (Department of Education)

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

The rest of the world is following suit, including the China, Dubai, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Japan, New Zealand and the US (Obama’s Computer Science for All initiative). Global initiatives like code.org who work with partners like Cartoon Network also support coding education (The Atlantic,

(<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/02/teaching-computer-science-without-computers/517548/>)

Forbes,

(<https://www.forbes.com/sites/parmyolson/2012/09/06/why-estonia-has-started-teaching-its-first-graders-to-code/#538981941>

Google: Education)

(<https://blog.google/topics/education/racial-and-gender-gaps-computer-science-learning-new-google-gallup-research/>)

Diversity + representation

Only 1% of British children's books feature a main character who is black or minority ethnic (The Guardian)

(<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/jul/17/only-1-of-uk-childrens-books-feature-main-characters-of-colour>)

32% of school children in England come from BAME backgrounds (Newsround)

(<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/44847385>)

Just 9% of children's books published in the US in 2017 featured African or African American characters (CNN)

(https://edition.cnn.com/2018/10/23/health/diversity-in-childrens-books/index.html?utm_medium=social&utm_term=link&utm_c)

51% of US kids under 9 are from mixed race families. The 2014-15 school year marked the first time that minority student enrollment in public schools surpassed that of white students. (PEW Research)

(<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/23/its-official-minority-babies-are-the-majority-among-the-nations-infants-but-o>)

The mixed race group is the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the UK and is expected to become the largest by 2020 (BBC)

(<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/10000910/mixed-race-fastest-growing-minority>)

In cartoons, 0% of princesses are engineers or coders, only 5.6% of characters are black and Latino characters only make up 1.4% of characters (The Conversation)

(<https://theconversation.com/why-its-so-important-for-kids-to-see-diverse-tv-and-movie-characters-92576>)

"Even television and videos targeting infants and toddlers are replete with gender stereotypes." Male characters are depicted as strong, emotionally restrained, risk-taking leaders (who also get to be funny), while females are agreeable, virtuous, demure, and primarily concerned with their physical appearance (and much more likely to be shown crying). (Common Sense Media report)

(<https://www.common Sense Media.org/blog/gender-stereotypes-are-messing-with-your-kid>)

Boys are three times more likely to receive a STEM toy at Christmas, with 31% of toys on the market are labeled as 'Toys for Boys' (Institute of Engineering and Technology)

Gender stereotypes influence children as young as 4. When choosing a career to act out, 63% of girls will choose 'cabin crew' as an occupation, whilst only 37% of boys. 80% of boys chose a job in 'engineering', compared with only 20% of girls. This gender split is roughly the same for children aged 11 -14 years old too. (TES Insight) (https://www.bsme.org.uk/uploads/010_011_TES_041116.pdf)