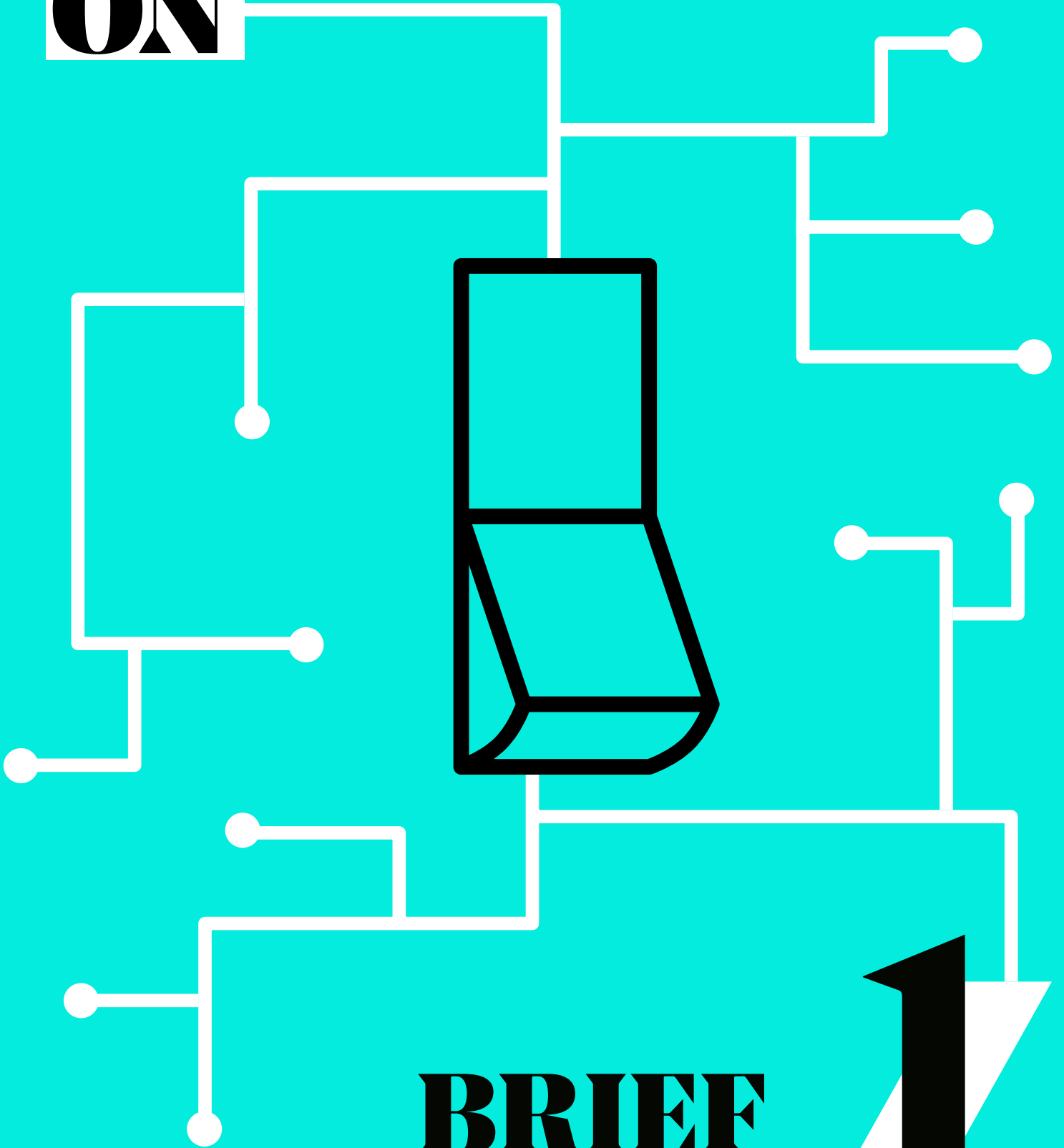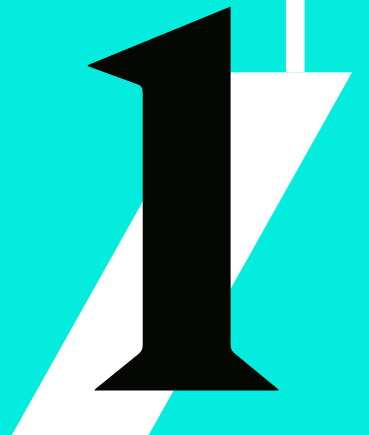# SWITCHED ON

BRIEF 1

Brief 1:
Switched On

How might we ensure that all young people have good access to high-quality education as online learning becomes more important?

Background

- Participating fully in society today requires us to be able to access technology and the internet. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused massive disruption to schools and colleges, with pupils across the world switching to learning from home.
- This has exposed a pre-existing **digital divide,** where young people don't all have the same access to the internet and to equipment like laptops, tablets and phones:
  - **10% of households have no access to the internet and 11.3 million people in the UK lack digital skills (Carnegie Trust, 2019)**
  - **700,000 young people did not have the digital skills or devices they needed for homework even before school closures (Lloyds Bank, 2019)**
  - **93 percent of schools from the most deprived areas have some pupils with limited access to IT compared with 73 percent of those from the least deprived areas (NFER, 2020)**
  - **During school closures independent school pupils were twice as likely as state school pupils to take part in virtual lessons every day (Sutton Trust, 2020)**
  - **36% of teachers said they did not have the IT equipment or digital skills needed for distance teaching (NASUWT Teachers' Union, 2020)**

What needs to change?

- Even as most pupils return to school, we believe that access to online learning remains important to ensure that all young people can fully participate in learning opportunities and succeed in their education.
- COVID-19 has also given us an opportunity to think again about how technology can improve learning. In order to make sure everyone can benefit from these improvements, particularly the most disadvantaged young people, we must find innovative ways to tackle the digital divide.

How to approach the brief

When tackling this brief, you might want to focus on:

- Physical resources: how can we improve access to technologies such as laptops, tablets and phones?
- Joined-up services: can schools collaborate with other local institutions such as libraries or local employers to improve access to technology and additional expertise?
- Enriching experiences: outside of formal lessons, what sort of other opportunities might young people without digital access miss out on? E.g. online musical instrument tuition or virtual work experience
- Learning at home: can parents and carers get more help to support young people with online learning at home? How might somebody's home environment affect their ability to use technology?
- How can technology and digital learning support the needs of all learners, including those with special educational needs and disabilities?
- How can digital technology support young people's social and emotional needs by helping to maintain relationships with teachers and peers?
- How can technology be combined with non-digital activities in a way that ensures pupil engagement and develops a wider range of skills?

Here are some examples of proposals that could meet this design brief:

- A cost-effective and accessible device that enables pupils to project mobile phone screens on to flat surfaces, to allow better participation in online learning.
- A service where older pupils volunteer as online tutors for younger pupils attending a school that is unable to offer daily virtual lessons
- A campaign for members of the public to donate unused IT equipment to pupils in need

Further Resources

- Sutton Trust Covid-19 Impacts: School Shutdown Briefing
- OpenIDEO COVID-19 Reimagine Learning Challenge Responses
- Camden Council launches scheme to help vulnerable students access online learning
- Digital divide: Six children sharing one phone for homework