

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE CABINET MEMBER – HEALTH AND COMMUNITIES

1 November 2016

Report of the Strategic Director - Economy, Transport and Communities

DIGITAL INCLUSION IN LIBRARIES

(1) **Purpose of Report** To inform the Cabinet Member of the digital inclusion work being undertaken by the library service to support local people.

(2) **Information and Analysis** Society is changing and many services vital to people's lives are becoming "digital by default". Increasingly, members of the public, who have little or no experience of using a computer, are visiting libraries to ask for assistance. For example, when searching and applying for work online using Universal Jobmatch and other job searching websites. Other people need help to apply online for essential benefits, such as Universal Credit, to bid for housing online or find information to help resolve their money worries.

Public libraries are ideally suited to providing computing help. They are freely accessible in local communities with friendly, helpful, trusted staff and free IT facilities and Wi-Fi. Libraries help people to build their confidence, knowledge and digital literacy skills to enable them to carry out many essential day to day life transactions in order to participate as fully as possible in the digital world.

In April 2014, Derbyshire Libraries began delivering a programme of assisted digital support under the banner of 'Work and Money Computer Help', delivering free one-to-one in-depth computer help. The assistance was targeted at libraries in some of the most disadvantaged parts of Derbyshire with high levels of unemployment.

Following the significant take up of the offer of support from local people, on 28 July 2015, the Cabinet Member approved funding of £96,000 to further develop this area of work (Minute No. 78/15 refers). In October 2015, two members of existing library staff were recruited on a fixed term basis to give a stronger focus and devote more time to delivering the Work and Money programme across a larger number of libraries.

The digital support that has been developed is tailored to meet individual needs and computer sessions, typically run for 75 minutes, with follow-up sessions if required. In addition to searching and applying for work, benefits

and housing online, members of the public are given help to sign up for and use email and send attachments and to use Microsoft Word to create and save an electronic CV or covering letter. To date, staff have delivered over 2,000 informal Work and Money sessions in libraries and nearly 500 pre-booked one-to-one in-depth sessions. The project has also delivered staff training to over 100 front line library staff, supporting them to deliver additional informal help and address common areas of need.

Staff have also planned and facilitated four major Work and Money Help events in libraries across the County. During these events they have worked alongside partners to offer information, advice and support to people as they look for work, develop their career, gain new skills and knowledge and deal with money worries. Library staff have also worked in an outreach capacity attending jobs and careers fairs, Food Banks and other venues, in order to target help to the groups most in need.

Integral to the effectiveness of the project is strong partnership working with other organisations such as the County Council's Adult Community Education and Welfare Rights Services, Citizens Advice, Derbyshire Law Centre and Pension Wise. Customers are regularly referred to these specialist advice organisations and they also refer clients to the library service.

In 2015, Derbyshire Libraries were successful in bidding for funding of £10,000 from the Tinder Foundation as part of this work. This award was used to fund the Learn My Way project which ran in Derbyshire libraries from January – March 2016. The Learn My Way (LMW) website has been developed by the Tinder Foundation as an online tool for improving basic digital skills. During the LMW project, over 200 people were helped to improve basic digital skills by attending one-to-one help sessions in libraries and approximately 50 people accessed the module Staying Healthy with NHS Choices on the LMW website.

The LMW project was promoted in libraries, via Derbyshire Libraries facebook and twitter pages, as part of the Be Online national learning initiative and to four Chesterfield Community Assembly meetings attended by 30 - 50 people at each venue.

Currently, the County Council is reviewing its plans for the contact channels it will use to deliver services to local people. As part of this, it is exploring opportunities for 'channel shift' whereby a range of existing transactions could be moved to the Council's website. The website is being fundamentally redesigned, with an increased emphasis being placed on electronic communication; completion of web forms, live chat and email will be the preferred methods of contact. The potential for payments to be made online, rather than through more traditional methods e.g. use of cheques, is also being explored.

Libraries are ideally placed to support these corporate changes and to ease the transition process for local people. The support and resources available in libraries will enable members of the public, who might otherwise be excluded from participating in this process, to have access to any new electronic methods of contact introduced by the County Council.

A celebration event has been planned for 17 November 2016 at Chesterfield Library to showcase and promote the achievements of the Digital Inclusion project work. A range of partners and participants have been invited to attend to help demonstrate the impact of the work being undertaken by the library service, as well as the benefits of working collaboratively.

Appendix 1 and 2 provide examples of the help provided, feedback and case studies.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The funding for the work currently being undertaken is covered by an earmarked reserve.

(4) **Social Value Considerations** Access to skilled and trained staff in community locations, as well as free broadband internet access and Wi-Fi, helps to ensure that local people are able to access a wide range of digital services. Access to such services are essential in ensuring that individuals maximise their access to benefits, job opportunities and the financial benefits delivered by online services. Lack of access and skilled support serves to widen the digital divide and further increase the potential for already disadvantaged groups to suffer digital and financial exclusion.

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: legal, prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

(5) **Key Decision** No.

(6) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(7) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Communities Department. Officer contact details – Don Gibbs, extension 36572.

(8) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That the Cabinet Member notes the report.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director - Economy, Transport and Communities

Examples of support provided by Derbyshire Libraries

Many of the people helped to use a computer are currently unemployed or have been made redundant. Some have been asked by the Job Centre to register for Universal Jobmatch and apply for jobs online. Other customers are searching for another job or want to further their career whilst still in employment, as well as people who need to carry out tasks online in connection with their current employment or other work and money needs. Typically, most of the people helped are completely new to using computers. The range of support provided to local people has included:

- Developing a basic knowledge of computing and the internet/online world, and learning more about using a mouse and keyboard and how a computer works
- Setting up and using email
- Setting up and using a Universal Jobmatch account
- Searching and applying for jobs on other websites such as Indeed and Monster
- Creating an electronic CV
- Using a memory stick to save and retrieve information/documents
- Uploading a CV to recruitment websites
- Applying online for jobs
- Applying via email for jobs using attachments
- Printing emails and attachments
- Helping people who have been made redundant to find relevant information about redundancy and how to claim redundancy pay online
- Ordering goods online after being issued with a Derbyshire Discretionary fund emergency grant
- Finding information about local food bank provision
- Finding out about the services of Community Banks/Credit Unions
- Using websites to find out about benefit entitlement and other welfare rights information
- Accessing online learning
- Printing payslips from employer website
- Searching/applying for training/courses
- Researching potential career and employer information
- Finding public transport information and maps to get to interviews/work
- Using tax website to find up to date tax information or complete tax return
- Finding information about pensions
- Applying for visas

Referrals and signposting

Library staff often refer and signpost to partner organisations for specialist information, advice and help, for example:

- To Derbyshire Discretionary fund or the local Food Bank during times of financial crisis
- To Derbyshire Adult Community Education or Derbyshire National Careers Service when wanting to develop knowledge/skills
- To Department of Work and Pensions when applying for/querying benefits or benefits information
- To information/advice organisations such as Derbyshire Welfare Rights Service, Derbyshire Law Centre, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centre and Citizens Advice when customers need specialist advice and help, e.g. to complete a benefits application form or get advice about redundancy or challenging a DWP sanction

Partners also refer their clients to Derbyshire Libraries to access free computing facilities, internet and Wi-Fi and to receive the Work and Money computer help as appropriate.

Partners work through libraries offering their services on a regular basis, for example Citizens Advice, Derbyshire Law Centre, Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centre, Derbyshire National Careers Service, Pension wise and Community Banks/Credit Unions hold sessions for members of the public to access their services in Derbyshire Libraries.

In addition to this, library staff work closely with partners on their projects to meet shared objectives, for example they have input into the Universal Credit seminars organised by Financial Action & Advice Derbyshire (FAAD) and Welfare Rights across Derbyshire to help professionals be prepared to assist their clients as they move onto Universal Credit.

Feedback on the support offered by the library service

Interviews and jobs

Some of the people who have been helped have contacted the service to inform staff that they have gone on to get interviews and jobs.

One customer who had a job interview said:

"In the short time that I was with you I've learned so much to help and done lots of things myself...I've applied [for jobs] myself...the 1-1 made so much difference...I've used the memory stick to do CV uploading...you ticked all the boxes, it just sank in so well, you explained it in a simple way"

Assistance to customers for who English is not their first language

Staff have assisted people who are not fluent in English. These customers can be particularly vulnerable and may need additional time and help to understand the information they are being presented with. For example, helping a customer to update and save their CV, apply for jobs, find relevant information online including information about UK tax, employment, benefits and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. One individual was also helped to order white goods online after they received an emergency grant from Derbyshire Discretionary Fund. They gave the following feedback:

"I thank God for sending you to help me...I hope you are able to continue to help more people"

Feedback

Some further examples of customer feedback are:

- *"I attended to get help for Universal Credit [online application]...made me more confident. Very pleased with the help I got"*
- *"It has made a huge difference and I now know how to access job sites and apply"*
- *"I attended to update my CV and to learn to use a computer to find work. It made me feel as though I had achieved something positive...she was very pleasant and didn't belittle me"*
- *"It has shown me how to use Microsoft Word and apply it to CV writing"*
- *"Yes, it has been very beneficial. Very kind and helpful. Completed a simple CV"*
- *"I've learned how to do and upload my CV... I have more confidence in myself, now I can search and upload my CV"*
- *I attended "to get help with money problems and with benefits , CAB, welfare rights...It has been excellent because I have managed to claim from the Derbyshire Discretionary Fund"*
- *"It has made a big difference, it has shown me what is possible"*

- *"I needed to upload my CV to Jobmatch after downloading it from email...more confident in how to do it, and up to date CV is now uploaded...I would come back for further help"*
- *"This has made a difference to me. My CV is done completely"*
- *"I now have an email address and learned basic skills"*
- *"Very helpful staff and people in the library. Was able to complete all my documents with relevant help"*
- *"Very interesting and easy to follow"*
- *"It helped me a lot with computer skills because I didn't have any at all"*
- *"I attended to get help with CV and redundancy claims...I now understand more about what to do next...very helpful"*

Areas where staff have enabled people to make progress include:

- Helping people to find out more about the mandatory reconsideration process when faced with sanctions and referring to specialist advice available from Derbyshire County Council Welfare Rights service.
- People made redundant from Leaderflush in Langley Mill, Courtaulds in Belper and BHS in Chesterfield, have been helped to find information online, access emails and attachments in connection with their redundancy payment application, get their CVs ready and learn how to apply online for jobs.
- Assistance with using a website to complete a tax return at Glossop and the customer found out that she was due a £500 tax rebate.
- Children's librarians providing Summer Reading Challenge activities at Holiday Hunger sessions are able to promote the Work and Money computer help, helping to reach families who may not realise the many ways in which libraries can support them.